

Application for Membership to the Ohio Ornithological Society

For an online version of this Application, see:
<http://www.ohiobirds.org/join.php>

Name _____

Organization _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____ E-mail (for electronic news updates) _____

Yes, I'd like to make a one-time donation to help support OOS. Amount \$ _____

Membership dues: \$ _____

Total payment enclosed: \$ _____ (please make checks payable to **OOS**)

How did you hear of OOS? _____

Are you interested in:

- Volunteering?
- Distributing OOS flyers within your club or community?

- \$15 Student/Limited Income
- \$25 Individual
- \$40 Family or Nonprofit
- \$100 Patron or Business
- \$250 Sustaining Member
- \$500 Benefactor
- \$1,000 Lifetime Benefactor

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



THE CERULEAN

www.ohiobirds.org info@ohiobirds.org

Summer 2004
Vol. 1, No. 2

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

The Wilds—

Our Inaugural Field Trip

Fortunately, after the monsoons of June 11, the following day dawned rain-free for the Ohio Ornithological Society's field trip to The Wilds. Thirty-two members and guests joined OOS board members **Peter King** and **Jim McCormac** at the rendezvous point at 8:00 am, where we were met by **Al Parker** of The Wilds and two of his staff, **Sam** and **Gabe**.

The Wilds provided a sturdy but somewhat vintage bus capable of holding our entire group, and piloted by the capable Gabe, off we went to look for birds. First stop was a large cattail-dominated wetland, where we were treated to good looks at a hunting Willow Flycatcher, a bold male Killdeer guarding his mate who was hunkered down on her nest, and a flyover Osprey. A piercing *keewow* alerted us to a Green Heron passing over, then a Yellow-billed Cuckoo put in a brief appearance. Good looks were had of a first-year male Orchard Oriole in need of singing lessons, followed by **Janet Duerr's** amazing spot of a well-concealed Eastern Kingbird on a nest. By the parking area, a White-eyed Vireo sang his incessant *pick up the beer . . . check!* but was reluctant to reveal himself.

Heading into the grasslands, we paused at the junction of Scott and Zion Ridge roads, where Bobolinks caught our eye. Then, loping over the ridge like an enormous predatorial moth came a Short-eared Owl! The owl was quite a treat as it hunted in front of our group, finally plunging into the grasses and emerging with a fat meadow vole. Then, a female Northern Harrier appeared, treating us to her buoyant flight. Both of these species are quite rare as breeders in Ohio, but probably are nesting at The Wilds this year.

Down Zion Ridge Road we went, to meet up with professor **Danny Ingold** of Muskingum College. Danny, with the help of Jason Larson, was conducting research on grassland birds, including mist netting and banding, and was good enough to share his work with us. We got to see Grasshopper and Savannah sparrows in the hand, and observe the subtle beauty of these shy, retiring species. All around, hordes of Bobolinks kept up a cacophony of their bubbly tunes, and many Henslow's Sparrows emitted their rather pathetic two-thirds of a second cricket-like hiccup. It was a good spot to hear other sparrows and learn their tunes, including Grasshopper, Savannah, Song, and Field sparrows. Some of the seemingly ever-present Orchard Orioles were engaged in nest construction, and lots of singing Eastern Meadowlarks added to the background chorus.

Off we went, to an area where the grasslands were interspersed with lots of brush, where we heard two singing Prairie Warblers. A fierce bout of pishing by some of us provoked an angry male Common Yellowthroat to charge up to the group and offer glimpses

of his striking plumage, suggestive of a bandit with mask. A distant Yellow-breasted Chat hooted and whistled a bit, but was not cooperative.

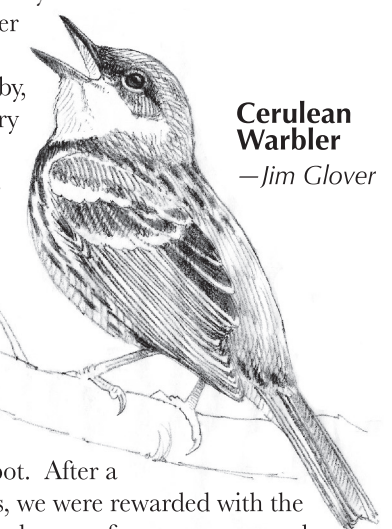
Nearby, off State Route 284, we walked out to the overlook hill where The Wilds will soon be building a large elevated platform replete with interpretive signage for birders. This site offers a commanding vista of a huge chunk of The Wilds, and should be a sensational place to observe raptors, such as the Golden Eagles that winter here.

As it was nearly noon, we retreated to the restaurant run by The Wilds, where we were treated to a wonderful feast. Not only was the food excellent and abundant, but it was a great opportunity for all of us to interact and learn more about each other. We gave the restaurant and its staff an excellent rating, and strongly recommend a visit.

Being of a mind to refresh what we had learned about grassland birds that morning, back we went to the junction of Scott and Zion Ridge roads. Now, there was not just one Northern Harrier, but a family unit of four! It was great to see that these rare Ohio breeders were nesting here. Along with the usual cast of grassland suspects was perhaps the world's most extroverted Henslow's Sparrow. This stud perched on a stunted shrub close at hand, and allowed us fantastic looks through scopes, in between his spirited attacks on apparent rival males.

Our trusty bus driver, Gabe, may wish to consider a career as a Baja 500 off-road racer. Al Parker knew of a territorial Cerulean Warbler off in some woods nearby, and of course we all wanted to try for that one. But, to get there required bulldogging the old bus down a road that even a jeep club might have looked at twice. Filled with potholes and muddy washouts, I suspect that some of our party wondered how the tow truck would ever reach us at times, but Gabe managed to get us back to the spot. After a bit of a hike back into the woods, we were rewarded with the song of the Cerulean Warbler, and some of us even managed a glimpse of him through the dense foliage. Al Parker's nicely done imitation of an Eastern Wood-Pewee stimulated the real McCoy to come in close, and then we had a Scarlet Tanager sing nearby. Upon return to the bus, we had good looks at Acadian Flycatchers, as well as the ever present Eastern Towhees and Cedar Waxwings.

All too soon, it was time to return to the parking lot on our magic bus, and call it a wrap. I think that all of us considered this a trip well taken, and a good time was had by all. A total of 72



Cerulean Warbler
—Jim Glover

- BOARD OF DIRECTORS**
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THE OHIO ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 14051 • Columbus, Ohio • 43214

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

THE CERULEAN

THE CERULEAN is the official newsletter of the **Ohio Ornithological Society (OOS)**. **THE CERULEAN** is published four times a year. It contains timely information regarding upcoming field trips & meetings, recent bird sightings & current hot spots, trip reports, as well as other pertinent birding information. A subscription to **THE CERULEAN** is included among the benefits of the OOS. Members of the OOS are encouraged to contribute announcements, articles, photographs, drawings, and other birding related information to the newsletter. Seasonal deadlines for contributions to **THE CERULEAN** are as follows:

- ❖ Spring: 1 March
- ❖ Summer: 1 June
- ❖ Fall: 1 September
- ❖ Winter: 1 December

Send contributions for the newsletter to the editor, Su Snyder, at cerulean@ohiobirds.org, or by regular mail to **THE CERULEAN**, c/o OOS, P.O. Box 14051, Columbus, Ohio 43214. For more information see the Publications page on the OOS web site at www.ohiobirds.org.

will follow the brunch. We hope to wrap up the day with more birding at MBSP and should be finished around 3:00 p.m. There will be two leaders - **Greg Links** and **Micki Dunakin**. The number of participants is limited to 20. Cost for OOS members is \$35, and that for non-members \$40. **Deadline for reservations is September 1st.** Make checks payable to **OOS**, P.O. Box 14051, Columbus, Ohio 43214. For more information, contact Micki Dunakin at edson@bright.net.

[<www.ohiobirds.org>](http://www.ohiobirds.org)

Delivers Birding News, Birding Site Guide, and More

Ohio birders can find a lot more than the standard online fare at our website. Sure, you'll find the juicy background material on our purpose, publications, and programs, and you'll find details on our workshops and upcoming field trips. But you'll also find several unique features that can help you better locate and understand Ohio birds.

Ohio's Birding News, for example, provides almost daily updates on bird happenings all across the state. Whether you're

species was tallied. It was fantastic to meet birders from around the state, and get to spend time in the field with everyone. We especially wish to thank The Wilds for their hospitality, and for being so open to catering to the birding community. I'd encourage everyone to visit — for more information, please go to www.thewilds.org.

—Jim McCormac,
President
Ohio Ornithological Society

Upcoming OOS Field Trip— Fall Warblers

The OOS is pleased to announce our next field trip. We will meet at the west entrance to the boardwalk at Magee Marsh at 8:30 a.m. on Sunday, September 19th. We will bird there around three hours, then go to Maumee Bay State Park for their Sunday brunch. A presentation on fall warblers

looking to add Brown Pelican to your Ohio list or you're curious to know what warblers cascaded down the Appalachians over the weekend, **Birding News** is your guide to "what's here now?" among Ohio's birds. Editor **Mike Busam** produces this feature, weaving the day's news into an interesting story that gives extra meaning to the phenomena involved. Mike's regional reports rely on information gleaned from the ohio-birds e-mail list plus photos and details from a network of birders across the state. Birders are encouraged to submit bird news or photos to Mike at news@ohiobirds.org.

The **Ohio Birding Site Guide** (see home page) features details on the best birding sites in Ohio, making it possible for you to locate a new site and learn about what birds you might encounter there during each season. It also provides tips on where to park, where to focus your hike for certain species, where you may heed your call from Mother Nature, and in few cases, some curious things to avoid during your stay! Each site guide entry was submitted by an Ohio birder and compiled by **Dan Sanders**, **Doreene Linzell**, and **Sheryl Young**. Already, the Society has posted about 40 sites and another 70 or so are in the works. The site guide will help all of us become more familiar with the many good places to bird in Ohio.

The **Photo Gallery** of Ohio's rare bird reports is a favorite stop for most surfers, and includes such visitors as the Ross's Goose and Vermilion Flycatcher. Reports of these rarities were confirmed by the Ohio Bird Records Committee, now sponsored by the Society. Details on reporting rare birds and recent actions of the committee can be found under "Records Committee" from the home page.

While you're perusing the site, be sure to check out **The Birder's Almanac** (found under "Calendar" on the home page), a primer that helps us understand "the vital interplay of time and space as they determine which birds they'll bring" to Ohio. The Almanac was written by Ohio birder **Bill Whan**, who for decades has observed, recorded, and written about our bird life. Bill presents a seasoned perspective on the subject and sheds light on many patterns, such as the typical progression of September's fall migration and how it often brings the year's largest raw numbers of birds. Bill also contributed heavily to the Resources section (also reached from the home page), which contains an expansive compilation of related links, historic documents, books and guides, and other ornithological details relevant for a wide range of Ohio birders from the casual observer to the most studious among us.

While the website contains much more than can be described here, there remain areas in need of further development. For example, you'll find essays describing our vision for what role the Society may play in the fields of conservation and education & research, and we are looking for synergistic input from people who can help us make progress in these vital areas.

We like to think of the OOS website as a living, breathing extension of all of those who enjoy birds in Ohio, a means to represent our varied opinions and perspectives and pool our resources for the common good. For that reason, we invite you to get involved in an area important to you. Please don't hesitate to submit your work, opinions, or ideas to the Society so that our website may continue to be a substantial resource for Ohio birders.

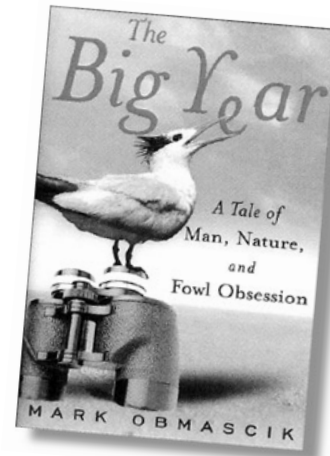
—Laura Kammermeier
Kent, Ohio

Book Review—

The Big Year: A Tale of Man, Nature, and Fowl Obsession

Obmascik, Mark. 2004. *The Big Year: A Tale of Man, Nature, and Fowl Obsession*. The Free Press, New York. Hardbound: 288 pp, \$25.

This book seems to have presented a dilemma to the publisher. Should it be promoted by treating its protagonists as dorky weirdos, or as adventurers? How many readers, The Free Press must have wondered, would be interested in a work about three men's all-out campaigns to find



in North America in a single year? Would readers cheer these guys on or just snicker at them? Unable to resolve these questions, the promoters hedged, saying the competitors "fight to the finish to claim the title in the greatest—or maybe the worst—birding contest of all time," seeking "to pursue their dreams, to conquer and categorize—no matter how low the stakes."

Fortunately the publisher took a chance with *The Big Year*. Obmascik has written a fascinating account that never assumes a superior or ironic attitude toward its obsessed protagonists. It works: I cannot say how many friends have told me they'd read the book in a rapt single sitting. Birders, competitive or not, delight in its stories—all familiar to one degree or another—of fond hopes, calculated strategies, rivalry and cooperation, triumph and despair, occasionally strained relationships at home and on the job, money problems, and so on—all in a grand pursuit of birds, especially the rarest of the rare. I counted 261 accurate species names of North American birds in the text, most of them sought-after ones—a sure attraction for fanatic birders and listers as well as a sign that the author is one of them.

Obmascik did not participate in any of the 1998 exploits he describes, relying instead on visits to the sites and interviews conducted long afterward. Nonetheless, he successfully elicits the subtle and often-unacknowledged contests involved, the pleasures of time spent in wild and remote places, the challenges both intellectual and physical, all the uncertainties and struggles and victories that make a year spent chasing birds conceivable, even attractive. He takes pains to introduce us to his three heroes, their lives and loves and livelihoods, and who among the readers of this review will not root for **Greg Miller**, an Ohio birder, whose challenges seem the most daunting? Greg's less comfortable circumstances and his talent and love for birding seem to overshadow the advantages his more acquisitive and wealthy rivals enjoy, making the score less consequential. His success especially tempts ordinary birders to imagine ourselves actually doing such a thing. Examples of real cooperation and sharing, moreover, soften the competitive edge of the narrative, and one is left with a sense that the final accomplishment, aided by a year of extraordinary

weather productive of rare vagrants, was in important ways a communal one.

The ambivalent executives at the Free Press must have been pleasantly surprised by the fortunes of this entertaining book. It has taken off on wings of praise. Birders—and they are legion—have of course devoured it, and *The Big Year* has had a wild ride in the sports press—for this is indeed sport more than science—from an eight-page spread in *Sports Illustrated* to interviews on National Public Radio programs on games. Drove of readers of many backgrounds have delighted in its suspense and exotic locales, changing fortunes and strategies, rivalry among skilled and complex contestants, and even some biology. *The Big Year* richly deserves its unanticipated popularity, and Ohio Ornithological Society members who haven't read it yet have a real treat in store.

—Bill Whan
Columbus, Ohio

Cerulean

Azure flashes
moved among the leaves.
Rivers traveled
fields and woods.
Songs were heard
from broadleaf trees.

Another spring
some fleeting song
yet still the birds
live on.
Something rare
will have been lost
when Ceruleans
are gone.

—Elaine D. Snively
31 May 2004

New Guide—Birds of Ohio

A new bird guide, by Ohio's own **James S. McCormac** and co-author Gregory Kennedy, was published this year by Lone Pine Publishing. The 360 pages of *Birds of Ohio* are full of information about the birds that occur in Ohio, including fun facts, color illustrations, range maps, ID hints, and details on habitat, nesting, feeding, voice, and similar species. Other useful features include a list of the 100 top birding sites in Ohio with descriptions of the top 20. Look for a review of *Birds of Ohio* in the Spring 2004 issue of *The Ohio Cardinal*, due out in August.

