



THE CERULEAN

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www.ohiobirds.org info@ohiobirds.org

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

FROM THE EDITOR

It's an honor to serve the OOS as the new editor of *The Cerulean*. Over the last four years and 16 issues, Su Snyder and a team of volunteers created a gem. Take a look at previous issues available online (<http://www.ohiobirds.org/publications/cerulean/past.php>)

Whether you're a longtime member or a new member getting your first issue, you will be amazed at the information in past volumes including site reviews, book reviews, and conference summaries. In this issue, look for a new column called Conservation Corner by OOS Conservation Chair Tom Bain.

I'm pleased to profile Sister Marty Dermody in this issue's Birder's Bio. I met Marty when we attended the Audubon Environmental Educators Camp in Greenwich, Connecticut in the early 1990's. We were both on scholarship from the Audubon Society of Ohio (Cincinnati Chapter). Marty's enthusiasm for birds, and the Audubon camp, helped turn me into a birder.

- Ann Oliver
Cincinnati

WINTER WILDS EXPEDITION

I knew it was going to be cold and windy at the Wilds. I was right...but the excitement of seeing winter raptors outweighed the cold, and I would not be disappointed!

My dad and I awoke early to leave my house near Delaware, Ohio to be at the Wilds by 8:45 a.m. My

new car GPS had the location plotted and we were off. We arrived at the main parking lot and found the meeting area for our assigned group (#6). About 120 hardy people attended. We were expecting a larger assemblage, but the cold weather must have kept a few folks home! It was fun to meet the many different birders I had seen at other events and mingle with new friends. Everyone brought their scopes, so I was able to try out all the new models.

Bill Heck and Glenn Crippen were leading our caravan, which included four cars with nine people. Bill rode with my dad and me: we talked about optics and swapped birding stories. Each of the cars had radios: our group was on our own channel. FYI: if you are using a GPS unit for navigation, Bill Heck advises some addresses may be shown as Chandlersville, not Cumberland, and roads may have different names. Please check Google Maps for alternate road names ahead of time.



A dusk vigil for the always entertaining Short-eared Owls.
Photo by Jim McCormac

One of the great things about the Wilds is the wonderful animals. On the road out of the parking lot to the Coal Haul Roads area, I found myself

saying “There’s a Rough-legged, over there by that herd of elk!” I think our animal list for the day was as long as our bird list.

On several occasions we jumped out and set up scopes, giving everyone a good look at hawks. Glenn saw smaller dark birds flying off the road, so we stopped and gave chase. We ended up finding a Meadowlark, but not the mystery birds.

From there we headed to the Knox Cemetery. We passed a group of hunters with dogs, probably hunting rabbits. We hoped they would flush something interesting, but no luck. The cemetery was on top of a hill which provided great views of the surrounding area. It was forested so it also provided a different habitat. At the cemetery, we saw American Goldfinch and a White-breasted Nuthatch. Another group saw Snow Buntings along that road.

over the grass. It landed and we were able to get the scopes on it for great looks.

From there, it was on to the Birding Station at Jeffrey Point, just down the road from the main parking lot. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) built an observation deck at this location. We jumped out into the wind and headed up to the deck. From this vantage, you can see the main Wilds buildings and into the gated area where the Wilds keeps some animals. We spotted elk, antelope, bison, camels (with two humps!) and crazy Star Wars looking animals called Takins. You can actually purchase little stuffed Takins in the gift shop!

While we were all looking at the Takins, someone said “That hawk is huge!” We zeroed in on the bird and realized it was a Golden Eagle. We got great looks as it soared across the fields. It was a

beautiful black bird with a golden wash across its head and shoulders. Interestingly, I had been looking at Rough-legged Hawks all day and had been impressed at how large they appeared. At one point a Rough-legged started harassing the Golden Eagle. In the same binocular view, however, the Rough-legged looked tiny compared to the Golden Eagle...almost like a Blue Jay attacking a Bald Eagle!

We lost the Golden, so after a few arctic minutes we headed back to the main building. Bill Heck later said “Standing on Jeffrey Point looking for the Golden Eagle was an act of either heroism or rank stupidity.” We thought we could get a better view of the area from behind the main visitor center. As soon as we

arrived, our group immediately relocated the eagle as it was again soaring out in the open. It actually soared up and over our group! Everyone got once-in-a-lifetime looks at the eagle at close range.

The group ate lunch in two shifts at the food court.



One of the seven groups searches for the Golden Eagle.

Photo by Jim McCormac

Next on our agenda was a lookout point with a spectacular view of rolling hills. Miles of grassland stretched out into the distance. We located a beautiful dark morph Rough-legged Hawk flying

We were in the second seating. During our meal we heard Al Parker's informative presentation called "Raptors at the Wilds". The lecture included pictures of birds and our group got to test our new found identification skills.

It was later reported the Golden Eagle had *appeared on cue* for the first lunch group! As soon as Al finished describing the field marks of the Golden Eagle, it soared past the windows and everyone inside got to see it at close range. Afterwards, OOS President Jim McCormac quipped "We were looking for the radio transmitter antenna and the guy in the shrubs flying it, but the bird was for real." No doubt *more* kudos to the great planning by the OOS team! After lunch it was back out into the field. Glenn



One of the two lunch shifts. We were treated to an excellent raptor lecture by the Wilds' Al Parker.
Photo by Jim McCormac

led us on a Long-eared Owl search in a pine grove off High Hill Road. We arrived at the same time as Bill Thompson's group and joined forces. We spread out, made one pass through the pine grove but didn't find anything. Bill's group moved on, but we kept looking, mainly because my dad had not yet remerged from the pine grove. He had discovered many owl pellets on the ground. After some searching in the area we accidentally flushed two large "somethings", but nothing we could identify.

With time running out we headed back to the main parking lot to drop everyone off. Most people stayed for the "after" event, looking for crepuscular

Short-eared Owls at Jeffrey Point. After almost an hour of no owl sightings, Jim McCormac made the command decision to move the group over to an area called "Long Pond" off Route 340.

We caravanned to the new location and on cue, a Short-eared Owl popped up and flew past the group with its characteristic "big moth" wing beats. The bird landed and we were able to get scopes on it quickly. Such a sight ... a tawny creature, gliding at sunset across a golden-brown grassy plain!

Thanks to the OOS team and to the Wilds for a great trip and some truly unique animals and inspirational birds!

- *Matt Erickson*
Dublin, Ohio

Editor's note: Thanks to the many people who graciously lent their time and abilities to make this expedition possible. In no particular order, they are: Dan Sanders, Aaron Boone, Jim & Bret McCarty, Glenn Crippen, Julie & Ken Davis, Marc Nolls, Janet Creamer, Cheryl Harner, Bill Thompson III, Tom Bain, Jason Larson, Bill Heck, Bob Placier, Jim McCormac, and Peter King. We also thank the staff of the Wilds and Al Parker for making their facilities available to us at a time they'd normally be closed. We apologize if we omitted anyone!

You can relive the day at the Wilds on four blogs:
- January 20th Ohio Birds and Biodiversity by Jim McCormac: http://jimmccormac.blogspot.com/2008_01_01_archive.html
- January 20th Flora and Butterfly Blog by Cheryl Harner (Weedpickers Blog) <http://www.flora-quest.com/blog.html?pg=4&cnt=5&t=a>
- January 20th Ohio Geology & Biodiversity by Tom Bain http://ohiogeologyandbiodiversity.blogspot.com/2008_01_01_archive.html
- January 24th Bill of the Birds by Bill Thompson, III http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/blog/archive/2008_01_01_archive.html

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

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

Send contributions for the newsletter to cerulean1@ohiobirds.org, or by regular mail to THE CERULEAN, c/o OOS, P.O. Box 14051, Columbus, Ohio 43214. For more information see the Publications page on the OOS web site at www.ohiobirds.org. Because the newsletter is sent as bulk mail, subscribers should remember that the Post Office will not forward this newsletter to a new address.

Please notify the Editor promptly if you move.

Editor—Ann Oliver

BIRDER'S EXCHANGE

What do you think of when you hear the phrase "Birder's Exchange"? Do you envision two twitchers trading tips about a rare bird sighting? Or... do you look into the future and foresee expansion of ornithological knowledge south of the United States?

Birder's Exchange is a program to get optics and other birding-related materials into the hands of birders and ornithologists working in Central and South America. Birders' Exchange was founded in 1990 by the Manomet Center for Conservation Science (MCCS). Many people who benefit from such equipment have a hard time affording it, or otherwise obtaining products that further their ability to conduct field research

In 1996, MCCS partnered with The American Birding Association (ABA). A productive partnership blossomed, building on the extensive birder network of ABA and the conservation links with Latin

America at MCCS. Since late February 2002, the ABA has run the program in its entirety. The ABA will continue to develop and expand the program based on the vision set forth by MCCS.

Dr. Bernard Master, who sits on the boards of both the Ohio Ornithological Society (OOS) and the ABA, suggested that the OOS collect items for this worthy program at last December's Ohio Bird Conservation Symposium. We put out the call for used optics and placed a collection box in a prominent spot: *two spotting scopes and seven pair of binoculars were donated* in addition to *four useful field guides*. We were thrilled with the gifts collected but not as excited as our fellow birders south of the U.S. will be to receive them! Because of *your* generosity, those optics will be viewing manakins, bush-tanagers, and trogons in addition to *all of the North American birds* that winter in the tropics.

Please, if you have any *used* (or unused!) *binoculars, scopes, or other birding gear* taking up space in your closet, feel free to pass them on to the OOS. We'll insure your gift gets to worthy recipients. Contact our Executive Secretary, Jen Sauter, at ybchat@insight.rr.com for details.

Big thanks to the following donors at the Conservation Conference: Craig Caldwell, Mike Edgington, Marc Nolls, Ralph Ramey, Randy Rogers, Hugh Rose and Judy Kolo-Rose, Randy & Sandra Rowe, and Jen Sauter. (some information lifted from the ABA website: <http://www.americanbirding.org/bex/news/index.html>)

- *Jim McCormac*
Columbus

Editor's Note: For an update on the The Kaufman Guía de Campo a las Aves de Norteamérica (the Spanish-language version of the Kaufman Guide to the Birds of North America): http://www.bsbo.org/sharing_the_joy_of_birding.htm

KILLDEER PLAINS

Three species of swan (Tundra, Trumpeter, & Mute), two species of owl (Long-eared & Short-eared), and both color morphs of Rough-legged Hawk added up to one fantastic day at Killdeer Plains Wildlife Area near Marion, Ohio. The February 17th event was organized by Cheryl Harner of Greater Mohican Audubon Society and Marc Nolls of Greater Akron Audubon: OOS cosponsored the field trip.

Even though a fair trace of ice and snow covered some areas, signs of spring were evident including Killdeer and Red-winged Blackbirds. Waterways were teeming with waterfowl including nine Greater White-fronted Geese and a few dozen Tundra Swans. As expected, Northern Harriers cruised low over the fields and Rough-legged Hawks “wind-hovered” in the sky.



Killdeer Plains, Wyandot County, Ohio; February
Photo by Jim McCormac

One of the birding highlights was the discovery of four cooperative Long-eared Owls: the pine grove roost was observed from a respectful distance preventing accidental disturbance of the cryptic creatures. One of the *non*-birding highlights was an indoor gastronomic feast of fresh fruit, hearty beef chili, hot vegetable soup, and a multitude of desserts including cookies and brownies!

Special thanks to the Ohio Division of Wildlife for allowing the use of the Sportsmen's Center for our morning gathering and lunchtime break.

-Ann Oliver
Cincinnati

BARRED OWL STUDY

RAPTOR, Inc. is looking for Barred Owl nests in suburban areas of Cincinnati including Hamilton, Clermont, and Warren County. The goal is to determine how much natural habitat Barred Owls need to survive and reproduce. The owls will not be disturbed, caught, or banded. If enough nest sites are studied, habitat surrounding Barred Owl nests will be compared to RAPTOR, Inc.'s ongoing 11-year study of suburban Red-shouldered Hawks.

Although Barred Owl nests are difficult to find, RAPTOR, Inc. hopes a few Atlas participants will share a nest location or site where fledged, pre-flying young (branchers) were observed. And of course, RAPTOR, Inc. will report any nests found to the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas.

Please contact the following people if you have Barred Owl nest information:

Cheryl Dykstra, Ph.D, cheryldykstra@juno.com

Jeff Hays, jlhays@fuse.net

Melinda Simon, melindasimon@cinci.rr.com

Raptor Environmental; RAPTOR, Inc.

The Cerulean is Available On-line

If you missed any previous issues of this newsletter, you can download them from the OOS web site at <http://www.ohiobirds.org/publications/cerulean/about.php>.

If you'd like to save trees (and OOS some postage), we will send you an e-mailed notice when future issues appear online, instead of a printed copy of this newsletter. Just send a note to the editor at cerulean1@ohiobirds.org.

Editor's Note: If you have previously sent a request for an online notice, and did *not* receive an email notification, please resend your request. I apologize for this inconvenience. Prior requests went into my bulk (junk) mail and were accidentally deleted.



FLORA-QUEST

EXPLORING OHIO'S WILDEST LANDSCAPE

Established in 2007, Flora-Quest is a hands-on learning adventure focusing on wild plants. Centered at the beautiful Shawnee State Park resort in the middle of Ohio's largest contiguous forest, the 65,000-acre Shawnee State Forest, a mind-boggling array of plants is at our fingertips. Roughing it is hardly necessary; facilities at the lodge are top-notch and good hotels are within 25 minutes in the city of Portsmouth.

Just to the west of Shawnee is the sprawling Edge of Appalachia preserve. Filled with unusual habitats and possessing one of the state's highest concentrations of rare plants, the Edge is a botanical paradise. Flora-Quest trips are split between Shawnee and the Edge, and these packages offer participants the greatest botanical adventure to be had in Ohio, at the best time of year to explore this region. Upwards of 1,000 species of native plants are found in this area – there are only about 1,900 natives in all of Ohio.

In addition to learning about common plants, most of which we'll see in profusion, Flora-Quest participants will also have the opportunity to observe a number of great rarities. Particularly noteworthy are the Appalachian plants found no further north than Shawnee. Newcomers are often amazed to see southerners like umbrella magnolia, pinxter-flower azaleas, and early stoneroot in the forest. Each trip option includes two expeditions – one to Adams County and the Edge of Appalachia region on one day, and Shawnee State Forest and vicinity the other day. All trips will find an ENORMOUS array of flora, far beyond what brief descriptions can convey. Also, one trip from each of the five options will visit a locale for Wherry's Catchfly, Flora-Quest 2008's signature plant. This stunning rarity is worth the trip alone!

We are fortunate to have some of Ohio's most gifted botanists and naturalists leading Flora-Quest expeditions. All of them know the area well, and are very familiar with the plant life of the region. Their leadership is invaluable, as first-timers (even second, third, and fourth!) are often overwhelmed by the vastness of Shawnee and the Edge, and scarcely know where to begin. Most of our guides are also well-versed in other facets of natural history, such as birds, butterflies, mosses and lichens, geology, etc. which only adds to the enjoyment of the trips.

The center of activities is the beautiful Shawnee Lodge and Resort, and we have arranged a special discounted rate. The accommodations and food are outstanding, with 50 rooms in the lodge and 25 cabins available, or the alternate, nearby camping. Steve McKee and Martin McAllister will treat you to interesting keynote presentations. Steve is Director of Gorman Nature Center in Mansfield, and a veteran botanist. Martin is a field manager for the Ohio Division of Natural Areas, grew up near Shawnee, and is intimately familiar with the specialized natural history of the region. An added bonus, John Freudenstein, Director of the Ohio State University Herbarium, will present a program about orchids, the most sought after plant in Shawnee. There will also be special evening field trips, and local vendors. Discount rates are also available at the nearby Ramada Inn in Portsmouth.

May is a time of rebirth in the natural world, and there is no better place to be than in the wildlands of Adams and Scioto counties to experience spring. We hope to see you at Flora-Quest May 2-4, 2008!

Please, visit our website at www.flora-quest.com for more information.

* Flora-Quest is supported in part by the Scioto-Foundation. Ohio State University Extension endorses the credit hours for participating in Flora-Quest for Master Gardeners and Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalists.

BIRDING BY EAR

May 30 to June 1

Want to visit the Wilds and not risk frostbite? Want to learn bird vocalizations, see abundant grassland birds, and look for Whip-poor-wills after dark? Sign up for the Wilds Fourth Annual Birding by Ear Weekend Workshop. Space is limited for the May 30 to June 1 event. Speakers include Dr. Jed Burt, Dr. Danny Ingold, and OOS President Jim McCormac. Beginner, intermediate and expert birders are welcome. Reserve your roost site in a Mongolian yurt by calling 740-638-5030 (extension 2286). For more information: http://www.thewilds.org/events/bird_by_ear.asp

OOS PARTNER: BRUKNER NATURE CENTER

Brukner Nature Center is a privately funded, nonprofit nature preserve dedicated to environmental education and wildlife rehabilitation, located just five miles west of Troy, Ohio off of State Route 55. The 165 acre preserve, bounded by the scenic Stillwater River, is comprised of a variety of habitats including pine forest, prairie, woodlands and wetland all traversed by 6 miles of hiking trails.



Brukner Nature Center offers numerous educational programs for school children, adults and families. Step back in time in the 1804 Iddings Log House, the oldest structure on its original site in Miami County. We care for over 40 native Ohio wildlife ambassadors that form the backbone of our educational programming. We also operate a Wildlife Rehabilitation Unit, accepting orphaned and injured native wildlife.

Our beautiful interpretive building houses a nature shop, wild animal exhibits and hands-on displays and is open Monday through Saturday from 9:00am – 5:00pm and Sunday from 12:30 – 5:00pm. Of special note to birders is our third floor, glass-enclosed birding vista, a comfortable spot to watch for feeder birds, including the commonly seen Pileated Woodpecker! Hiking trails are open from sunrise to sunset. Parking is free. There is a small admission fee on Sundays for nonmembers.

LAKE ERIE WING WATCH WEEKEND

April 11-13, 2008

**Cedar Point Center at Firelands
College
Huron, OH**

This is the 16th annual event! This year it will start off with a night hike at Edison Woods in Erie County. Concurrent sessions on warbler identification, raptor identification, bird song, eagles, Purple Martins, plumages and molts, birding hotspots, beginning bird watching and others will be offered. Bill Thompson III, from Bird Watchers Digest, will be the keynote lunch time speaker. His talk is titled “No Child Left Inside---Getting Kids Into Birds”. Bill hopes to have his latest book ready to sign at this event!



There will also be vendors and displays, raffles and lunch!

An open house will be offered at Back to The Wild wildlife rehabilitation center in Castalia. On Sunday, guided field trips are offered at Magee Marsh, Sheldon Marsh and Sandy Ridge.

So gather your birding buddies, Audubon group, neighbors and friends, and head to the lake for a fun-filled, educational three days! Discount lodging is available for birders! For a complete schedule and registration information you can log onto: www.lakeeriewingwatch.com

SITE HIGHLIGHT: MAUMEE RIVER

Birding along the Maumee River

I guess you could say that my interest in birding the Maumee River started on an autumn evening about 10 years ago. Intent on hearing a real, live Eastern Screech-Owl, a group of night hikers and I waited quietly along an expansive, muddy bank, peering eagerly into the darkness.

Along that bank, the moon made shadowy tree silhouettes appear longer than usual; however, the area near the water was dark, making it tremendously difficult to view anything below. All at once, from the dark depths of that closest bank rose a startling cacophony of bizarre croaking noises. Chills ran up and down my spine, as I could not recognize the origin of the loud utterances, and I was quite certain that it was not screech-owls!

Not knowing who or what was creating that racket, I encouraged the group to skedaddle farther along the trail and look from a

distance. Only then was the mystery solved by beautiful silhouette views of two Great Blue Herons just as surprised by us, as we were of them. Consequently, this unique experience along the “Mighty Maumee” had, indeed, heightened my interest in wanting to know more about the diverse bird life that uses the Maumee River and its corridor areas as stopover habitat and in breeding.

Over the years, I have had many other unique birding experiences along the Maumee. Many of my memories are filled with Bald Eagle sightings, squawking Black-crowned Night-Herons, nesting Prothonotary Warblers, Belted Kingfishers, and Cliff Swallows. In addition, I look forward to seeing many species and numbers of swallows that flock over the river in early fall.

I encourage you to plan a trip to the river and learn more about the birds that use this special habitat. Plan a hike during the month of May to view many of the warblers that use this area as stopover habitat. Consider a summer or fall canoe paddle and get an up-close view of some of the river’s interesting island areas, as well as diverse amounts of shorebird species that probe the muddy shallows in mid-August. Or check out the varieties of migrating waterfowl in late March/early April or October/November. The following are popular areas to view birds along the river:

Side Cut Metropark: 1025 River Rd., Maumee, OH 43537

Highlights: Fallen Timbers Rapids; Riverview Trail; Siegert Lake Wildlife Observation Area. www.metroparkstoledo.com (Scheduled day/evening hikes)

Farnsworth/Bendview Metropark: 8505 S.

River. Rd. (US 24), Waterville, OH 43566

Highlights: Towpath Trail from Farnsworth Boat Launch to Bendview (great for warblers and blooming Redbud Trees); Roche de Bouf area for flocking swallows; shorebirds

Providence Metropark: US 24 at SR 578, Grand Rapids, OH 43522

Highlights: Providence Dam Shelter Area; Orange Trail

Otsego Park: Wood County Park District, 20000 W. River Rd. Intersection SR 65/235
www.woodcountyparkdistrict.org (birding/canoeing)

Mary Jane Thurston State Park: 1-466 SR 65, McClure, OH 43534, 419-832-7662 (birding/camping)

- Karen Menard
Toledo

OLD WOODPECKER, NEW YEAR

When I started bird watching, conventional wisdom dictated I would *never* add an Ivory-billed Woodpecker to my life list. Reports from Arkansas in 2005 raised exciting possibilities. I followed the debate, and search, with hope I might someday encounter this dramatic species. My dreams faded as reports from the Cache River were not followed by more sightings, but by *doubts* over the strength of the evidence for the Ivory-billed's continued survival.

When new reports emerged in 2006

from the Choctawhatchee River in Florida, I resolved to go. Despite limited experience in a trackless swamp habitat, I wanted to immerse myself to gain greater appreciation for both the lifestyle of the Ivory-billed and the requirements of the search. How hard is it to get a picture of a woodpecker from a kayak in the deep swamp? Is it more difficult to recognize Pileated Woodpeckers in swamp woods than in Ohio woods?

Information gleaned from the internet and topographic maps of Florida helped me identify two areas I wanted to explore: a long feeder stream near Smokehouse Road, and a series of oxbows known as the Reason Lakes. I allowed a day and a half in each area, and packed my kayak to allow me to camp and extend my time in any promising area.

I arrived at Smokehouse Road the morning of New Year's Eve and excitedly pushed off, insuring my binoculars and camera were both ready for instant use. One of my first encounters was a life mammal! Hearing repeated splashing behind me, I turned to see a river otter playing in mid-stream. As I paddled back to watch,

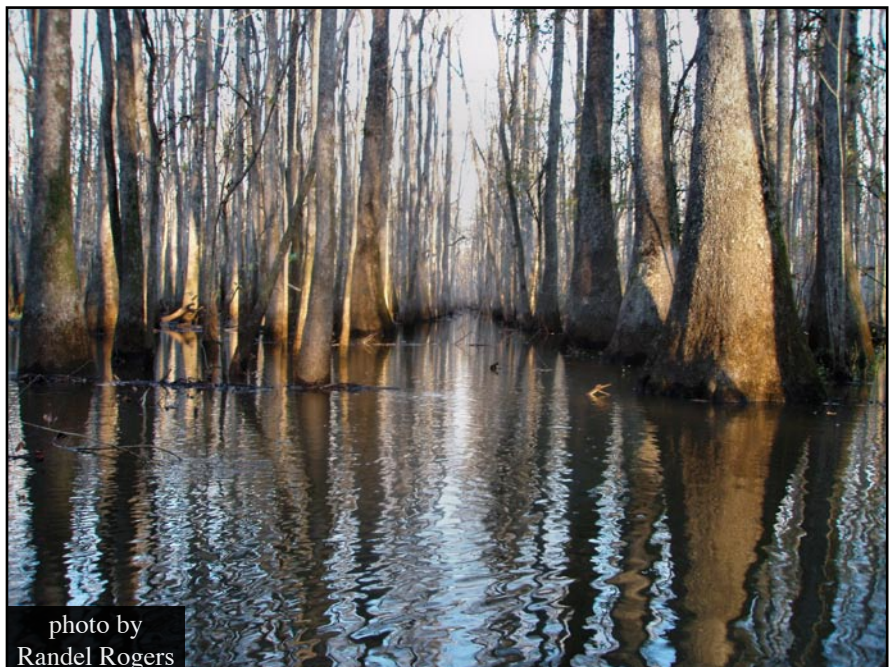


photo by
Randel Rogers

he swam towards me, apparently curious, and passed within fifteen feet.

Soon I began to hear woodpeckers. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was my first woodpecker and proved to be the most approachable. Somewhat less approachable, but with more prominent calling and tapping were a number of Red-bellied Woodpeckers. As expected, although numerous, the Pileated Woodpeckers were hardly approachable at all, but still very easy to find both by their vocalizations and fleeting looks at their large forms moving tree to tree. Even in the briefest glimpse, these always appeared to be what they were - I was *not* able to convince myself an *experienced* observer would mistake a Pileated for an Ivory-billed. As the sunlight began to fade, I started looking for an island of dry ground on which to camp—no easy task—and settled on a small (300 square feet) patch near a major stream junction. I swear this spot was between every Barred Owl territory in Florida! They were noisy but hilarious neighbors that evening, surrounding me with calls and hoots and clucks... like a Greek chorus of Ivory-billed naysayers!

Alas, I can not report any evidence of Ivory-billeds, but I can attest *finding* an elusive bird and *getting* a photo in that habitat would be very difficult. Paddling among the cypress was an awesome experience and one I will likely do again!

-Randel Rogers
Galloway, Ohio

BIRDER'S BIO – SISTER MARTY DERMODY

Remember the classic 1960's sitcom "The Flying Nun" and the tag line "When lift plus thrust is greater than load plus drag, anything can fly"? Actress Sally Field's portrayal of a *Daughter of Charity* included wearing a white habit and starched cornette on her head. The religious headgear, resembling the outstretched wings of a pale juvenile Kumlien's (Iceland) Gull, lifted "The Flying Nun" in the slightest of breeze for three seasons on ABC.

Of course nuns can't really fly, but one Cincinnati member of the Sisters of Charity (SC) watches what takes flight. Meet "The Birding Nun", OOS member Sister Marty Dermody. Marty serves as congregational photographer for her order. Her *habit* includes wearing either binoculars or camera around her neck! Her spotting skills are unparalleled. In fact on the recent OOS, Greater Mohican Audubon Society (GMAS) and Akron Audubon Society trip to Killdeer Plains, Marty's keen spotting ability enabled seven people to add Long-eared Owls to their life lists. Cheryl Harner, GMAS president, dubbed Marty "Goddess of the Owl Grove"!

Marty has influenced and introduced innumerable folks to birding. Marty's passion for birds stretches nearly 30 years, has flown her across five continents, and has touched scores of people. Her legacy includes helping establish the new Clifford Bird Observatory at The Motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity. To quote Marty: "Birds are my passion: I want to help as many people as possible appreciate birds in whatever way possible."

Marty's birding journey began in 1979. That's

when she took Tom Hisson's (formerly of Dayton Museum of Natural History and currently education coordinator for Aullwood Audubon Center & Farm) birding class while teaching school in Dayton. She recounts ten joyful weeks of studying skins, learning bird songs, and taking field trips to places such as Crane Creek State Park and Magee Marsh Wildlife Area. Although she later moved to Cincinnati, she's repeated Hisson's course twice.

Marty taught school for 25 years, integrating birds as *gifts of God* into science, social studies, and religion class. Her student's observation skills improved as they began to pay attention to birds. Several parents became avid birders. One student later teamed with Marty during his high school years for three separate Birdathons: he's now a teacher at St. Xavier High School, Cincinnati. In the early 1990's, The Audubon Society of Ohio (Cincinnati Chapter) gave Marty a scholarship to attend the Audubon Environmental Educator Camp in Greenwich, Connecticut.

In her spare time, you'll find Marty in the field, in the classroom, or at bird banding stations. She leads field trips for Wild Birds Unlimited (Glenway Avenue location, Cincinnati). Marty teaches birding to older adults through Life Learn classes at The College of Mount St. Joseph: her "Feathered Friends" lectures focus on backyard birds. Last fall, she observed 35 species during a "Big Sit" on the grounds of the Sisters of Charity Motherhouse overlooking the Ohio River.

Certainly one of Marty's greatest joys is participation in the new Clifford Bird Observatory (CBO) located in the courtyard of

St. Therese on the Motherhouse grounds of Mt. St. Joseph. CBO is just steps away from Marty's office. CBO is named in honor of the late Adele Clifford SC, a former president of the college and revered biology teacher. Current assistant biology professor Dr. Jill Russell, co-founder and executive director of the Avian Research and Education Institute (AREI) initiated CBO with help from her husband Dr. Dave Russell of Miami University. Marty says learning molt patterns to assist in record keeping for CBO takes her birding to the next level.

Of note, there's one particular bird Marty longs to see netted at CBO or any another banding station: a Peregrine Falcon named Charity. In the spring of 2007, Marty volunteered to monitor a peregrine nest in downtown Cincinnati for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. ODNR allowed Marty to name one of the female offspring in honor of her order, the Sisters of Charity. So even though you may never see Sally Field flying overhead as a *Daughter of Charity*, there really is a Charity that can fly!

- Ann Oliver
Cincinnati

For information about Clifford Bird Observatory: http://www.srcharitycinti.org/news_events/press121307.htm

For Avian Research and Education Institute (AREI): <http://www.cas.muohio.edu/arei/aboutarei.htm>

For a link to Aullwood Audubon Center & Farm Center for Lifetime Learning (Tom Hisson bird watching class): <http://aullwood.center.audubon.org/CLL.PDF>

For a candid photo of Marty getting warbler neck, link to Bill of the Birds on May 20, 2007

(she's on the right, in the blue jacket in the second photo): <http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/blog/2007/05/three-days-at-mohican.html>

CONSERVATION CORNER

Ohio Birders Support Red Knot Recovery

Complete the following phrase: *Green Eggs and ___*? If you are a Dr. Seuss aficionado you may say *Green Eggs and Ham*. If you follow New Jersey affairs of state, and are aware the US Shorebird Conservation Plan lists Red Knots as a "Species of High Concern" because of their alarming decline, you may think *Green Eggs and Red Knots*.

Ohio birders recently joined worldwide birders and environmentalists to support legislation to extend a New Jersey moratorium on harvesting horseshoe crabs in Delaware Bay. That's because the *green eggs* of horseshoe crabs are intricately linked to the threatened survival of Red Knots. Migrating shorebirds such as Sanderlings, Semipalmated Sandpipers, Ruddy Turnstones, Red Knots, and other shorebirds depend on horseshoe crab eggs to provide critical stopover fuel to complete their spring journey. Today, the Red Knot is in peril, down more than **80%** in Delaware Bay, and other shorebird species continue to decline sharply.

A little background: Red Knots complete one of the longest migrations known. Most of these robin-size birds winter near the tip of South America. In the spring they fly 9300 miles to Canada's high Arctic to nest: in the fall Red Knots return the same distance to southern Chile and Argentina. During their north-bound journey Red Knots stop just two or three times

to rest and refuel by gorging on horseshoe crab eggs. Almost all eastern Red Knots (*Calidris canutus rufa*) stop along Delaware Bay to feed, doubling their weight for the next leg of their extraordinary journey. As of May 2007, a US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) publication on the conservation status of eastern Red Knots estimated the population to be **less than 20,000** and predicted the eastern *rufa* could become extinct in the next 10 years.

Horseshoe crabs are a keystone species sustaining the annual shorebird spectacle in the Delaware Bay, sometimes called an "American Serengeti". Abundant eggs and larvae of horseshoe crabs are essential for the year-round health and biodiversity of the bay. The crabs' natural profusion historically ensured a predictable and abundant supply of nutrition for migrating birds. Horseshoe crab eggs also provide sustenance for gulls and myriad other life forms on land and in the ocean.

A little evolution: Horseshoe crabs are ancient creatures more closely related to long-extinct trilobites than modern crabs. Their lineage began at least 445 million years ago during the Ordovician Period. Modern horseshoe crabs, four species world-wide, belong to a group pre-dating the dinosaurs: their roots trace to the Early Triassic Period. Our North American species *Limulus polyphemus* is found from the Yucatan Peninsula to Maine, but nowhere is it abundant like in Delaware Bay. Horseshoe crabs are a traditional economic resource along the Atlantic coast. They have been used as fertilizer, hog feed, and lately, as cheap fish bait used to catch whelk and eel for overseas markets.

A little biology: Horseshoe crabs come ashore with high tides from April through June. They

gather along the nighttime strandline. Small males surround large females carrying as many as 100,000 or more eggs. One determined male crab clings to the back of a female, using specialized appendages. The cling-on male fertilizes the lion's share of her eggs as she deposits her clutches in shallow excavations in moist beach sand. Other males cluster around the mating pair attempting to fertilize some of the eggs.

During the early 1990's abundant horseshoe crabs piled up in a nearly continuous writhing bronze-colored 'pavement' along miles of shoreline during May and early June. Beaches were green with excess eggs piled in heaps on sand, scattered by waves, and layered inches deep, floating on slack waters. Huge flocks of Red Knots and other shorebirds thrived on the reliable annual bounty. Less than a decade ago, the whirl

of immense shorebird flocks along Delaware Bay beaches was an inspiring spectacle drawing birders and nature lovers worldwide. Springtime birdwatchers saw throngs of migrating Red Knots and other shorebirds along the coast. At that time, the USFWS estimated the eastern Red Knot population to be 100,000 to 150,000.

The natural abundance of horseshoe crabs also lured truckloads of bait fishermen who found

the crabs were easy pickings. Hardworking watermen filled trucks and tractor-trailers with horseshoe crabs for the bait market. Large female horseshoe crabs, the primary egg layers, were a favorite target of bait collectors. The unfettered flurry of over harvest injured the Delaware Bay ecosystem. This was the heyday of the horseshoe crab bait business and a portent of the end of an "American Serengeti".

Large female horseshoe crabs carrying as many as 100,000 eggs are far less common today. That's why shorebird 'fuel' is in short supply. Horseshoe crab eggs are harder to find, leaving

shorebirds less energy to store as fat to fuel migration and nesting. The imperiled Red Knot will recover only if there is no further delay in recovery of horseshoe crabs. Previous moratoriums stopped the rapid decline in horseshoe crab numbers, but more recovery time is needed. Slow-maturing horseshoe crabs have not



Lucky and determined Buckeye birders can see Red Knots in our home state occasionally. Small numbers are found along Ohio's north shore annually, usually young birds during fall migration. This photograph was taken by Lana Hays at Conneaut in late summer.

recovered their fecundity. Female horseshoes require eleven years to reach sexual maturity, and many more years to become super egg producers. Economic interests continue to pressure legislatures in New Jersey and Delaware to allow profitable harvest.

Thankfully, there is new hope for the Red Knot. As this newsletter goes to print, the horseshoe crab harvest moratorium is gaining strength among New Jersey legislators. Troy Ettel,

NJ Audubon Director of Conservation says NJ legislators were amazed at the enormous outpouring of support for Red Knots from beyond the Garden State border. Emails, letters, and phone calls from Ohio and around the world helped energize the campaign.

The NJ State Senate Environment Committee approved Senate Bill S1331 March 10, a move to extend the harvest moratorium another two years. Legislation passed in both the NJ Assembly (70-6 on March 13th) and NJ Senate (39-0 on March 17th). The bill should be signed by NJ Governor Corzine this spring before horseshoe crabs begin their annual migration from the continental shelf to Delaware Bay during May and June. According to the PressofAtlanticCity.com, the moratorium will be in effect until the Red Knot population reaches 240,000. Fines for illegal harvest of horseshoe crabs are \$10,000 for the first offense and \$25,000 for subsequent violations.

The Red Knot and the Delaware Bay ecosystem will hopefully return to health as horseshoe crabs recover from massive overharvest. The eastern Red Knot may not go the way of Dr. Seuss' mythical creature "The Lorax". As the horseshoes increase and mature, little green eggs will again blanket beaches. Green balls of energy will fuel the return of superabundant life in Delaware Bay and we will rediscover an "American Serengeti."

- *Tom Bain*

Chillicothe

For the most recent update of Red Knot Conservation Status (February, 2008): http://www.defenders.org/resources/publications/programs_and_policy/wildlife_conservation/imperiled_species/red_knot/status_of_the_red_knot_february_2008.pdf

For a link to US Fish & Wildlife document on the conservation status of the Red Knot: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/endangered/Red%20Knot%20Assessment%20May%202007.standard.pdf>

For a link to the PressofAtlanticCity.com: <http://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/184/story/106589.html>

For a link to Crash: A Tale of Two Species on NATURE Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/crash/conservation.html>

For a link to New Jersey Audubon Society Shorebird/Horseshoe Crab Conservation Campaign: <http://www.njaudubon.org/Conservation/HSCrabAlert.html#updates>

For a link to Conservation Issues on the OOS Ohio Birding Forum: <http://www.ohiobirds.org/forum/viewforum.php?id=16>

For a link to the New Jersey State Legislature website: <http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bills/BillView.asp>

QUEEN CITY BIRD FESTIVAL

Cincinnati's first Queen City Bird Festival will be held Saturday, May 3rd, sponsored by the College of Mount St. Joseph and the Avian Research and Education Institute (AREI). Events include an early morning bird walk, bird banding demonstration, blessing of the new Clifford Bird Observatory, and a plethora of children's activities. Speakers include Drs. Jill & Dave Russell, Ned Keller, Kathy McDonald, and Casey Tucker. See AREI's website for more information: <http://www.cas.muohio.edu/arei/news.htm>



Member's Corner

Thank you for your donations!

We would like to thank and acknowledge the following members who have given generous donations. These donations have been deposited into The Ohio Ornithological Society's Conservation & Education Fund. These funds will be used towards promoting conservation, education and research of Ohio's avifauna. Thank you!

Annoymous
Ms. Carol F. Bretz
Stan & Gwen Fischer
Kim & Cindy Graham
Connie Wolcott

Welcome New Members!

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

Alice Cook
Mary Cox
Greg Cudworth
Patrick Ernst
Jessica Faller
Paul Gorley
Deborah and David Griffith
Warren I. Grody
Carrie Hill

Gabe Hostetler
Kim Hudyma
Rae A. Johnson
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Laura and David Keene
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Ryan Luke Steiner
George Sydlowski
Jack A. Van Kley
Todd J. Weinkam
Mark Wiley
Sally Wood

OOS Calendar of Events

4th Annual Conference: Mohican State Forest: May 16 – 18, 2008

Mohican is one of Ohio's most significant sites for breeding birds. About 24 species of warblers breed there annually, including many rare species associated with the pristine, old-growth hemlock ravines, like Canada Warbler. Over 100 species of breeding birds nest in Mohican each year, including many noteworthy boreal breeders like Winter Wren and Hermit Thrush. There will still be plenty of migrants passing through, too, so the overall conference list will be a big one.

Midwest Raptor Conference: Maumee Bay State Park: September 26-28, 2008

Join the Ohio Ornithological Society and our partner the Southeastern Michigan Raptor Research group for an interesting event that's all about birds of prey and their incredible fall passages around western Lake Erie. We'll have an interesting and expert slate of speakers, capped by keynote speaker Brian Wheeler. Brian is author of Peterson Field Guides®: Hawks and A Photographic Guide to North American Raptors. He is one of North America's foremost authorities on raptors, and is an outstanding photographer. Field trips will include a visit to Lake Erie Metropark in nearby Michigan, where late September raptor migrations can be phenomenal.

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

Save the date for The Midwest Birding Symposium sponsored by The Ohio Ornithological Society & Bird Watcher's Digest to be held at Lakeside, Ohio. Keep your eyes peeled to The Ohio Ornithological Society's and Bird Watcher's Digest web site for announcements!

Ohio Ornithological Society Membership Application

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

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____



\$_____ Donation amount - Yes I would like to make a one-time donation to help support OOS.

\$_____ Membership Dues.

\$_____ Total Payment Enclosed (Please make checks payable to OOS.)

How did you hear of OOS? _____

Are you interested in:

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

- ☐ \$15 Student/Limited Income
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- ☐ \$40 Family or Nonprofit
- ☐ \$100 Patron or Business
- ☐ \$250 Sustaining Member
- ☐ \$500 Benefactor
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Welcoming backyard birdwatchers and researchers in the field alike, the Ohio Ornithological Society is the only statewide organization specifically devoted to fostering a deeper appreciation of wild birds, fellow-ship and collaboration in advancing our collective knowledge about them, and our ability to speak with one voice to preserve Ohio's bird habitats.

OUR MISSION...

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