

**A friendly reminder . . .**

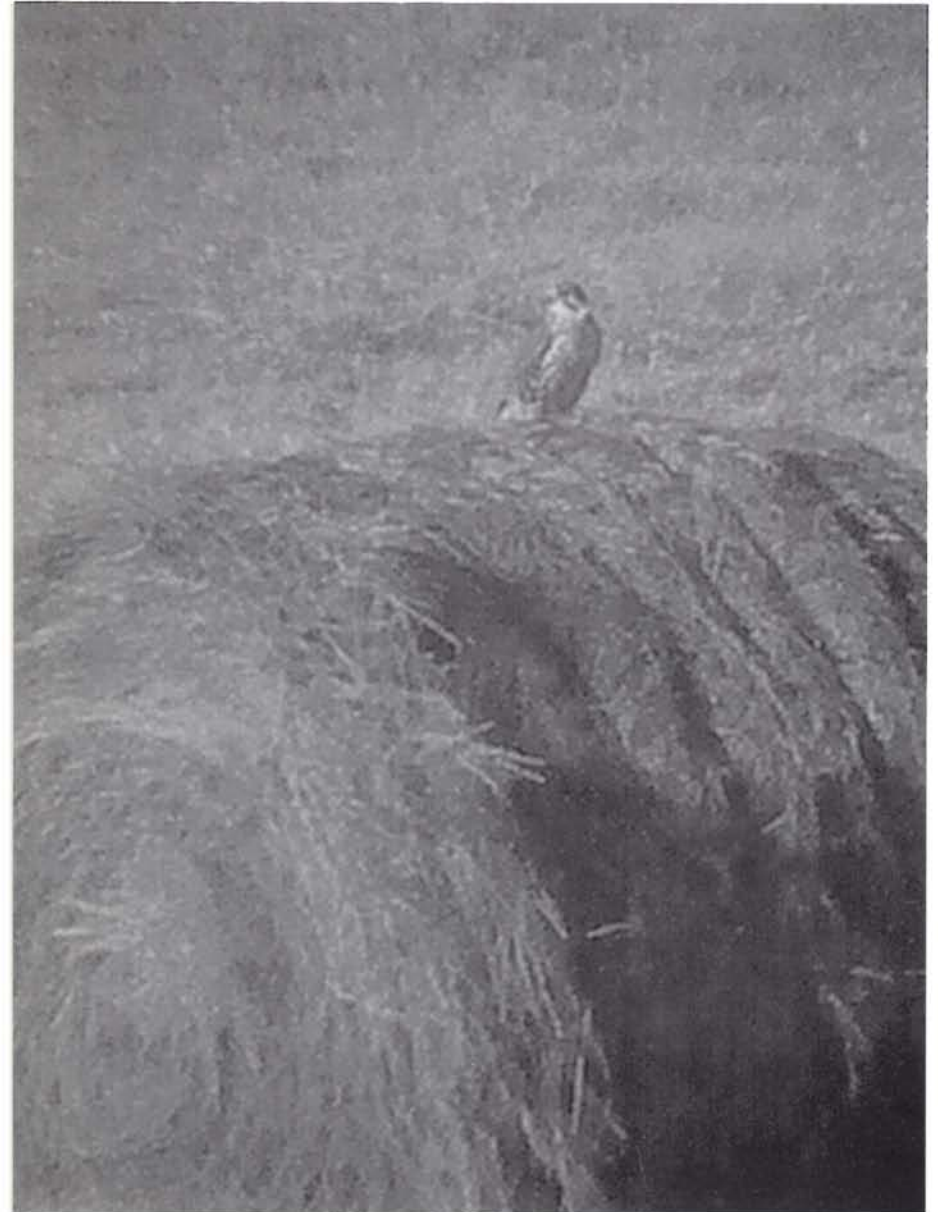
It's time to renew your subscription if this box is checked.

<b>Winter 2003-04 Overview</b> by Bill Whan.....	49
<b>Winter 2003-04 Reports</b> by Bill Whan.....	52
<b>Further Afield</b> Robert Harlan.....	69
<b>Can You Hear Prebasic Molt?</b> Kevin E. Metcalf.....	74
<b>Short Notes: My Summer Guest</b> by John D. Kraus.....	80
<b>Short Notes: Monumental Merlins North and South</b> by Lori Brumbaugh and Lou Gardella.....	82
<b>Annals of Pelagic Birding in Ohio: Thick-billed Murre</b> by Bill Whan.....	85

**The Ohio Cardinal**  
2338 Harrington Road  
Akron, OH 44319

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
US POSTAGE PAID  
PERMIT NO. 487  
AKRON, OHIO

*The Ohio*   
**CARDINAL**<sup>TM</sup> Vol. 27, No. 2  
Winter 2003-04



*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.

<b>Seasonal Report Due Dates</b> Winter (Dec.-Feb.)—March 25 Spring (Mar.-May)—June 25 Summer (June-July)—August 25 Autumn (Aug.-Nov.)—December 25	<b>Please send all reports to:</b> Bill Whan 223 E. Tulane Road Columbus, OH 43202 <a href="mailto:danielel@iwaynet.net">danielel@iwaynet.net</a>
--	---

### Subscriptions

The subscription rate for one year (four issues) is \$25 including membership in the Ohio Ornithological Society. Please send all subscription requests to:

**The Ohio Cardinal**  
c/o Edwin C. Pierce  
2338 Harrington Road  
Akron, OH 44319

Because it is sent as bulk mail, subscribers should remember that the Post Office will not forward this magazine to a new address. Please notify the Publisher promptly if you move.

### The Ohio Cardinal

Bill Whan, *Editor*

Edwin C. Pierce, *Publisher*

Jim Glover, *Design Manager*

The Ohio Bird Records Committee: Jim McCormac, *Secretary*  
ODNR Division of Natural Areas and Preserves  
1889 Fountain Square Court  
Columbus, OH 43224

ISSN 1534-1666

**On the Cover:** Having just eaten a bird, possibly a meadowlark, this prairie falcon struck a familiar pose in a hayfield on reclaimed stripmine land in Meigs Twp, Muskingum Co. on 25 February 2004. *Photo* © Alan Ryff,

## Winter 2003-04 Overview

**Bill Whan**

223 E. Tulane Rd., Columbus, OH 43202

[danielel@iwaynet.net](mailto:danielel@iwaynet.net)

We enjoyed more or less normal winter weather this time, at least on average. The latter half of January was the harshest, averaging ten degrees F below normal with widespread icing, inevitably displacing water birds. These displacements concentrated waterfowl and gulls in open water statewide, making some assessments of their numbers and variety a little easier. All the same, aviators reported that the surface of Lake Erie did not freeze solid, and large numbers of these aquatic species were escaping our notice in slivers of open water far offshore. Something, perhaps the relative brevity of the cold snap, encouraged a variety of species to hang around in unaccustomed numbers. Certainly the waterfowl refugium at Camp Dennison in Hamilton County generated some impressive records. February had above-freezing temperatures on 24 of its 29 days in Columbus, and invited early northbound waterfowl.

Surprisingly, 156 species were reported in Ohio during our cold and snowy January, with five warbler species and five of shorebirds, apparently a record total and perhaps unexpected in view of the weather. What we learn about the numbers and distribution of birds in January is boosted by enthusiastic listers who increasingly go out of their way to seek out as many species as possible in the first month of the year. Their exertions are welcome in figuring out how many species are really around, and we wish they'd scour every corner of the state as thoroughly in every month of the year.

The season as a whole produced rather high reported numbers of a number of species: certain gulls (of 13 species), sapsuckers, owls, hummingbirds once again, pipits, and several half-hardy songbirds, along with some odd warbler and sparrow records. Sandhill cranes and tundra swans were also among species found in remarkable numbers throughout the season. A spotty but noticeable winter finch incursion was forecast—based on food sources to our north—and the best predictions were confirmed, as we had numbers of redpolls, siskins, nuthatches, and purple finches far better than last winter's. Predictions for minimal numbers of crossbills, grosbeaks, and Bohemian waxwings were also to prove well founded.

Last winter we recorded eight review species for the state—species sufficiently rare that documentation is required to add them to the official records. Our total of five was more modest this winter: Ross's goose (2), prairie falcon, California gull (2), rufous hummingbird 10 (eight rufous and two rufous/Allen's), and loggerhead shrike. Certainly the bird of the season was the prairie falcon that haunted areas of SE Muskingum County for three weeks, evading detection by hundreds of observers and staying far enough away to deprive the rest of views that would have confirmed its sex and age or produced a sharp photographic image; that on our cover, generously contributed by Alan Ryff, was the best we know of.

For years *The Ohio Cardinal* has featured a complete compilation of the state's Christmas Bird Counts—both "official" and "unofficial"—in its winter issue, but this time we cannot. National Audubon has experienced major problems with its

computerized compilations of CBC reports, and while we could have rounded up nearly all of the data the old-fashioned way, we have decided we cannot provide a truly complete summary on time until these problems are ironed out. We hope to present this feature in its entirety in the spring issue, on the assumption readers agree that a complete compilation will be worth waiting for. The lack of many data from CBCs has to some extent hampered the Reports that appear below, but we've done the best we could with what was available to us.

We warmly welcome the help and expertise of our new Design Manager, Jim Glover, with this issue. Jim recently retired after 34 years as an artist for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. Among his many works with which our readers will be instantly familiar are the cover art of the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas (1991) and the cerulean warbler logo for the Ohio Ornithological Society.

Finally, with this issue *The Ohio Cardinal*, like so many other state bird journals, will begin work under the sponsorship of a state organization--- in our case the Ohio Ornithological Society. From now on a subscription to the *Cardinal* will include membership in the OOS and a number of additional benefits that come with membership, including a quarterly newsletter, an OOS decal, an updated 40-page Ohio checklist in pocket-size form, and discounts on costs of OOS field trips and conventions, as well as privileges to nominate and elect OOS Board members. We eagerly anticipate joining an organization designed to focus the knowledge and effort and good will and cooperativeness of Ohio's many birders in the cause of aiding wild birds through education, research, advocacy, fellowship, and everyday enjoyment of our pursuit. Please ask interested friends to join us: write to us at the postal or e-mail addresses inside the front cover, and visit the OOS web site at [www.ohiobirds.org](http://www.ohiobirds.org). When you join, remember that a \$25 yearly membership covers only goods and services currently available to members; if you'd like to see more done we encourage you to enhance the OOS's capabilities and join at a higher level as a donor. Either way, please consider volunteering your time and the fruits of your birding endeavors to the Society . . . especially to the *Cardinal*! 🐦

### Corrigenda

Two brants reported at Pleasant Hill Lk 17 Nov 2003 were in *Richland*.

The 30 Aug 2003 osprey should have been attributed to Medusa Marsh, in *Erie*.

What was described as an osprey nest in *Portage* in 26(3):124 later turned out not to be a nest.

The 3 Nov 2003 hummingbird in *Wayne* was a rufous hummingbird.

The 100 bobolinks of 28 Sept 2003 were found at MWW.

### For the Record

Here are noteworthy records for previous seasons that for one reason or another were not published here earlier:

**Greater White-fronted Goose:** one was with Canada geese in *Ashland* 23 Nov 2003 (L. Hochstetler).

**Northern Harrier:** a pair near Cadiz, *Harrison* was regularly seen from spring through early Dec 2003 (T. Ford) in suitable breeding habitat.

**Gyrfalcon:** After study in these pages [3(4):45] documentation of a 22 Jan-15 Feb 1981 record of an imm

gray-morph gyr at ONWR. A. Wormington of Pt. Pelee, ON was persuaded that a gyr seen there 22 Feb 1981, a first local record, was the same individual.

**Rufous Hummingbird:** an imm ♂ stayed in Strongsville, *Cuyahoga* mid-Sept through 9 Nov 2001 (A. Adkins, ph *vide* L. Rosche).

The Reports follow the nomenclature and taxonomic order of the 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the *AOU Check-list of North American Birds* (1998), including the 44<sup>th</sup> Supplement (July 2003). 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: 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 29 Feb 2004; EHSP=East Hbr SP in *Ottawa*; fide= "in trust of," said of data conveyed on behalf of another person; GLSM=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*); 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; ODOW=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.

# Winter 2003-04 Reports

**Bill Whan**

223 E. Tulane Road, Columbus OH 43202

danielel@iwaynet.net



This Ross's goose was seen by many observers at Navarre in Stark Co. Photo by Jason Estep on 11 January 2004.

**Greater White-fronted Goose:** Twenty reported, one 3 Jan in *Wyandot* (**R. Counts**), and the rest the latter half of Feb, maximum six in *Scioto* the 18<sup>th</sup> (**J. McMahon**).

**Snow Goose:** About 400 reported, most of them Dec and Feb. High cts: 70 for the Columbus CBC 14 Dec, 62 overhead in *Hancock* 18 Dec (*fide* **B. Hardesty**), and 53 on the Lorain CBC 20 Dec (**J. Pogacnik**) and. A flock again wintered at ONWR, with 48 (28 white morph) there 1 Feb (ONWRC).

**Ross's Goose:** One was documented 10-18 Dec at Lk Rockwell, *Portage*, and another 23 Dec through least 3 Jan near Navarre in *Stark*. Reports from both are with the OBRC.

**Brant:** Quite rare in winter, rarer still inland in winter, one was found w/Canadas 17 Jan near Loudonville in *Ashland* (**J. Herman fide** **S. Snyder**); it remained, straying at times into a pond nearby in *Holmes*, through

at least 11 Feb (**T. Leslie**).

**Mute Swan:** Though their numbers have probably not decreased, reports of multiple mutes were of only 28 in *Erie* 7 Feb (**D. Overacker**) and 13 on the Hoover CBC 20 Dec.

**Tundra Swan:** Extraordinary mid-winter numbers persisted around the state into the eop. On 4 Jan, the ONWRC count of 1164 compares with an average Jan count of 102 over the past 11 years there (**E. Pierce, R. Harlan**) with ~400 there 15 Feb (**J. Pogacnik**). Jan and early Feb reports came from *Mahoning* (60 on 16 Jan, **C. Holt**), *Pickaway* (seven 30 Jan, **A. Haslage**), *Portage* (76 on 17 Jan, **B. Bolton**), *Wyandot* (15 on 31 Jan, **R. Sempier**), *Lake* (eight 11 Jan, **Pogacnik**), *Franklin* (four on 14 Jan, **C. Bombaci**), *Cuyahoga* (49 on 15 Jan, **L. Gardella**),



This brant sidestepped through spring-fed ponds in Ashland and Holmes counties for an unusual inland winter record. Photo by Heather Nagy in Holmes Co. 22 Jan 2004.



Some of the ~800 tundra swans seen on the Toussaint River in Ottawa Co. on 25 February 2004. Photographer Gary Meszaros says this flock may represent as much as 10 percent of those that winter on the Atlantic coast.

*Greene* (3-12 on 21 Jan, **J. Hickman**), *Clermont* (five on 2 Feb, **C. Carver**), and *Hamilton* (11 on 6 Feb, **A. Gaynor**). **G. Meszaros** found ~800 birds on the Toussaint River 26 Feb.

**Wood Duck:** At least 50 were reported from ten counties in deep winter, the highest count of 20, in *Holmes* 3 Jan (**S. Snyder**).

**Gadwall:** Persisted in appreciable numbers at spots during January: six at La Due Res 1 Jan (**K. Metcalf**), 14 for the 4 Jan ONWRC, 75 on 7 Jan at Camp Dennison, *Hamilton* (**B. Foppe**), 28 at Lk Phippen, *Portage* 8 Jan (**L. Rosche**), and five at Hoover Res, *Franklin* 16 Jan (**R. Thorn**). After the mid-month clutch of cold, very few were reported, led by six in *Holmes* 16 Feb (**S. Snyder**).

**American Wigeon:** The Cincinnati CBC had its second-highest total with 89 on 28 Dec, thanks to Camp Dennison. Seven toughed it out at Ottawa on 4 Jan (ONWRC), but most retreated south, where 50 were in *Hamilton* 7 Jan and 20 in *Clermont* 29 Jan (both **B. Foppe**). Thirty at KPWA 29 Feb were returning north (**R. Sempier**).

**Blue-winged Teal:** Extremely unusual in Jan and perhaps wounded during the fall, two drakes were reported for the Carey CBC of the 3<sup>rd</sup> (**T. Bartlett**).

**Northern Shoveler:** Unusual numbers for winter included 24 in Akron 13 Dec (**L. Rosche**) and a record 77 for the 28 Dec Cincinnati CBC, where numbers at Camp Dennison varied between 50 and 68 from 12 Dec through 30 Jan (**B. Foppe**). On 8 Jan, 38 were a surprise at Hoover Res (**C. Bombaci**), as were 19 at Pine Lk in *Mahoning* 5 Feb (**C. Holt**).

**Northern Pintail:** Remarkable numbers included 50 on the 4 Jan ONWRC, then on 8 Jan eight at HBSP (**D. Russell**) and 27 at Hoover Res (**C. Bombaci**); 42 were in *Columbiana* 8 Feb (**B&D Lane**). Migration was underway 23 Feb, with 35 at KPWA (**D. Sanders**).

**Green-winged Teal:** Two were in *Knox* 1 Jan (**L.E. Yoder**), and Camp Dennison numbers peaked at eight

2 Jan (**B. Foppe**). Heading north were two at Pickerel Ck WA 28 Feb (**P. Lozano**) and 23 at Eastlake 29 Feb (**K. Metcalf**).

**Canvasback:** The high count was of 1000+ apparently southbounders on the 4 Jan ONWRC. Small numbers were reported inland at many locations through the period.

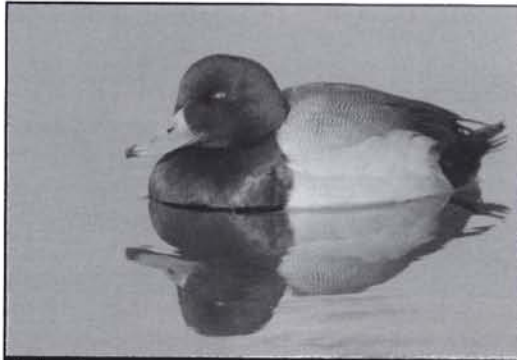
**Redhead:** Sixty at Eastlake 31 Jan (**L. Rosche**) represented birds persisting in Lake Erie, while only single-digit reports emerged inland. Large northbound movements began as early as 20 Feb, with 70 at BCSP (**D. Overacker**), culminating in a massive ~3500 at Metzger Marsh the 29<sup>th</sup>, a personal high count for veteran **T. Kemp**.

**Ring-necked Duck:** Wintered locally in good numbers, continuing a recent trend. The Cincinnati CBC garnered its second-highest count with 504 on 28 Dec, where **B. Foppe** counted 300 on 31 Dec, 175 on 22 Jan, and 35 on 16 Feb at Camp Dennison. **E. Snively** tallied 24 in Canton 1 Jan, **L. V. Fazio** 240 at Wellington Res 7 Jan, **L. Rosche** 32 on 9 Jan and 90 on 2 Feb in *Portage*, **D. Dister** 256 in *Montgomery* 10 Jan, and **R. Thorn** 80 in Columbus 11 Jan. Smaller but appreciable numbers persisted through Feb.

**Greater Scaup:** High count ~400 at Eastlake 31 Jan (**L. Rosche**). At Camp Dennison in *Hamilton* were as numerous as lessers, with 10 on 29 Jan (**B. Foppe**). Appeared in small numbers well inland elsewhere, too, with seven in *Butler* 18 Jan (**M. Busam**).

**Lesser Scaup:** Began gathering in large numbers offshore as early as 6 Dec, with 2500+ at MBSP (**B. Whan**), and huge rafts of indiscriminable scaups were periodically visible far offshore through the period.

**Harlequin Duck:** A female spent at least 31 Jan (**L. Rosche**) through 14 Feb (**K. Metcalf**) in the warm water outflow at Eastlake PP.



A handsome greater scaup joined the gulls at E. 72nd Street in Cleveland. Photo by Robert Royce in February 2004.

**Surf Scoter:** Forty-six reported for winter, with a high count of 21 on 20 Dec for the Lorain CBC of 20 Dec. Three singletons reported inland. Latest report 25 Jan at Eastlake (**C. Holt**).

**White-winged Scoter:** Eleven reports, mostly in Jan, the highest (and latest) count of three surprisingly at Camp Dennison 10 Feb (**B. Foppe**).

**Black Scoter:** Forty reported, all from Lake Erie or nearby, the latest of two 22 Feb at LSR (**J. Pogacnik**).

**Scoter sp:** **J. Pogacnik** counted 24 black or surf scoters passing LSR 11 Jan.

**Long-tailed Duck:** Reported as follows: ♀ HWSP 6 Dec (**D. Dister**), 14 Dec *Clermont* (**P. Wharton**), 16 Dec Lk Buckhorn (**B. Glick**), Cleveland 18 Jan (**P. Lozano**), 23 Jan LSR (**J. Pogacnik**), two 4 Jan Metzger Marsh (**V. Fazio**), and 2 Feb at Eastlake (**H. Armstrong**).

**Bufflehead:** Highest numbers came from the Lk Erie islands CBC, with 1487 off Kelleys Isl and 603 off Bass Isl 14 Dec. The Cincinnati CBC had a record 75 on 28 Dec.

**Common Goldeneye:** Large reported flocks were of 722 for the Toledo CBC 14 Dec, 581 at Metzger Marsh 4 Jan (**V. Fazio**), and 2842 passing LSR 22 Feb (**J. Pogacnik**). Highest inland number was 26 at EFSP 11 Feb (**B. Foppe**).

**Hooded Merganser:** Scarce during the cold latter half of January, but previously **L. Rosche** reported 250 in Akron 13 Dec., and the Cincinnati CBC set a new record with 157 on 28 Dec.

**Common Merganser:** Many seen through the period, with 1950 on the 14 Dec Toledo CBC, 1900+ on Sandusky Bay 2 Jan (**V. Fazio**), 853 for the ONWRC 4 Jan (best numbers since 1980), 521 at LSR 11 Jan (**J. Pogacnik**), 1700+ n. of the mouth of the Grand River 19 Jan and 700+ at Eastlake 31 Jan (both **L. Rosche**), and 2842 at LSR 22 Feb (**Pogacnik**).

**Red-breasted Merganser:** The accustomed multitudes included 5000+ at Eastlake 11 and 20 Dec (both **L. Rosche**), 11,000 off the Old Woman Creek estuary in *Erie* 7 Jan (**V. Fazio**), and 11,040 off LSR as late as 22 Feb (**J. Pogacnik**).

**Ruddy Duck:** **L. Rosche** had 60 in Akron 13 Dec, and the Cincinnati CBC 26 on 28 Dec. Three were found in *Knox* 1 Jan (**L.E. Yoder**), and from 1-15 were regularly seen at Camp Dennison in *Hamilton* through January and February (**B. Foppe**).

**Red-throated Loon:** Only one, in Dayton 4-5 Dec (*fide* **C. Mathena**).

**Common Loon:** A poor showing. A dozen birds were reported, all inland, in Dec, the high count of four at Caesar Ck SP on the 6<sup>th</sup> (**L. Gara**). Two birds delighted January listers on the 1<sup>st</sup>, one at Buckeye Lk (**J. Estep**) and one oddly in alternate plumage for the Gypsum CBC (**C. Rieker**).

**Pied-billed Grebe:** A record high was 98 on the Cincinnati CBC of 28 Dec, and 45 remained in Camp Dennison 17 Jan (**B. Lacker**). Others utilizing unfrozen water included two 3 Jan in *Coshocton* (**L.E. Yoder**), one in Cleveland's Flats 18 & 22 Jan (**P. Lozano**), and two at Summit Lk in Akron 1 Feb (**G. Bennett**).

**Horned Grebe:** High ct 20 at Caesar Ck SP 5 Dec (**S. Corbo**). Unusual deep-winter birds were at BCSP 18 Jan (**D. Overacker, N. Smith**) and in *Butler* 10 Feb (**C. Betrus**).

**Red-necked Grebe:** One bird, at Eastlake 1 (**J. Pogacnik**) and 2 (**J. Lehman**) Feb.

**Double-crested Cormorant:** A few probably wintered locally, as at Hoover Res (**R. Thorn**). Two for the 28 Dec Cincinnati CBC was a record high, and the second record ever. On 1 Jan, 120 was a record high for the Gypsum CBC, and on 7 Jan 18 were already hanging around Turning Pt Isl in Sandusky (**V. Fazio**).

**Great Blue Heron:** At Ottawa, 88 tarried through 7 Dec (ONWRC). By 22 Feb, 30 were paired and on nests in *Summit* (**K. Ostermiller**).

**Great Egret:** One was southbound in a 24 Jan snowstorm near Zanesville (**L. Daniele**).

**Black-crowned Night-Heron:** CBCs reported five 14 Dec (Toledo), one 14 Dec (Columbus), and six 20 Dec (*Ashtabula*). **H&S Hiris** reported one at Magee 21 Dec.

**V. Fazio** found 12, including 5 adults, at Turning Pt Isl in Sandusky 7 Jan.

**Black Vulture:** In the south, the *Adams* CBC tallied 53 on 14 Dec, 91 was a record for the Cincinnati CBC on 28 Dec, two roosted at the HWSP lodge 2 Jan (**D. Dister**), 19 were over *Brown* 19 Jan (**D. Graham**), and on 25 Feb 30 were noted in *Clermont* (**D. Morse**). The Millersburg CBC tallied 60 birds 16 Dec, **P. Knoop** counted five in *Hocking* 6 Jan, and **J. Larson** saw 32 in *Knox* 14 Jan.

**Turkey Vulture:** A winter-long presence in *Holmes*, with 60 on 2 Dec in Walnut Ck (**J.A. Miller**) and 55 on 17 Jan in e. *Holmes* (**E. Schlabach**). Birds far to the north were one in *Cuyahoga* 16 Dec (**D. Horn**), three in *Conneaut* 1 Jan (**J. Pogacnik**), and one over Akron 14 Feb (**S. Hanse fide P. Lozano**). The Cincinnati CBC posted a record 274 on 28 Dec. **B. Foppe** had 150 in *Clermont* 4 Feb. Daily attentions by adolescent male humans forced the consolidation of the two large *Athens* roosts, with ~500 on 22 Feb at Stroud's Run (**E. McElroy**).

**Bald Eagle:** Burgeoning. Local highs included five at a deer carcass in *Coshocton* 28 Feb (**L.E. Yoder**),

and five the same day near Pleasant Hill Lk (**B. Glick**). ODOW's winter eagle survey netted 352 birds (271 adults) in 57 counties, a healthy increase over last winter's then-record 304; highest county tally was 67 in *Sandusky*.

**Northern Harrier:** Noteworthy concentrations included 15 for the *Adams* CBC of 14 Dec, 15 in a single *Wyandot* field 21 Dec (**R. Counts**), ~25 at KPWA 19 Jan (**L. Gara**), ~30 in Meigs Twp of *Muskingum* 19 and 26 Feb (**L. Rosche**), and a remarkable 28 in a single group at MWW in *Hamilton* 14 Feb (**P. Wharton**).

**Sharp-shinned Hawk:** High count five for the *Ashland* CBC 20 Dec.

**Cooper's Hawk:** Continues to fill in the urban niche for birds with an appetite for birds. Nineteen on 28 Dec was a record for the *Cincinnati* CBC.

**Northern Goshawk:** An adult was found near The Wilds in *Muskingum* 25 Jan (**D. Linzell** et al.). An imm was observed 8 Feb in *Avon* Lk (**D. Sanders**).



This unusual young red-shouldered hawk was photographed 18 Jan 2004 at Spring Grove Cemetery in Cincinnati by Lori Brumbaugh, who offered the following observations: 'The feet are GRAY, no rufous anywhere except a touch of it on the primaries after the crescent. The bird is white from the front with a few streaks near the throat, few spots down the sides. The brown back has white mottling. The crown/nape feathers stick out.'

**Red-tailed Hawk:** A dark-morph bird was in *Hamilton* 21 Dec (**D. Brinkman**).

**Rough-legged Hawk:** A good showing by a species whose summer haunts are as far north of us as Miami is south. **R. Sempier** estimated 25 at Killdeer Plains WA 3 Jan, **T. Bartlett** counted 14 in *Seneca* 24 Jan, and **L. Rosche** ~30 in Meigs Twp, *Muskingum* 19 and 26 Feb.

**Golden Eagle:** Wintered for the eighth consecutive year at The Wilds in *Muskingum*, with a bird first noted 11 Dec, and a night roost of two through the cop (**A. Parker**), and two imm and at least one adult there 29 Feb (**C. Caldwell** et al.). An imm seen near *Zoar*, *Tuscarawas* (**D. Kramer**) 9 Feb may have been one of these birds, as might an imm seen 8 and 13 Jan at *Egypt Valley* WA (*Belmont*) by **D. Smith**. But

maybe not.

**Merlin:** About two dozen reports from around the state, including groups at cemeteries in Cincinnati and Cleveland (see short note in this issue), reflecting an increasing presence at urban sites in N. America in recent years. Why they seem to like graveyards so much is an interesting question.

**Peregrine Falcon:** Eleven winter reports, most of which we can easily attribute to released birds associated with urban nesting sites.

**Prairie Falcon:** On 15 Feb **M. Flynn** et al. discovered a prairie falcon in Meigs Twp. in *Muskingum*. The bird was seen intermittently by m obs through 7 Mar, when **J. McCormac** and **B. Master** were the last to report it. Details with the OBRC. Ohio's third or fourth record, it elicited memories of persistent, undocumented, but nonetheless interesting reports of this species here and at Killdeer Plains in this and recent years.

**Virginia Rail:** Three were heard south of Holmesville through Dec and Jan (**B. Glick**). **C. Rieker** found two at *Abram's Lake* 28 Dec for the *Lakewood* CBC, with no subsequent reports. The probable continuation of overwintering at SVWA was signaled by the discovery of one there 8 Feb (**R. Kolde**).

**Common Moorhen:** Quite unexpected was a young bird found on the 7 Dec ONWRC.

**American Coot:** At Camp Dennison, 400 on 22 Dec dwindled only to 200 by the eop (**B. Foppe**), and doubtless aided the *Cincinnati* CBC's total of 526 on 28 Dec. A few hung on as always in the frozen north, with the perennial *Lorain Harbor* flock at 31 on 2 Jan (**V. Fazio**) and 10 on the 4 Jan ONWRC.

**Sandhill Crane:** Over a thousand birds were reported in western parts of the state during Dec, the high count 226 over *Greene* on the 1<sup>st</sup> (**T. Shively**). This species is wintering further north with each passing year recently: **J. Castrale** of the *Indiana DNR* reported 24,619 at *Jasper-Pulaski SWA* 18 Dec, the high count there for the entire year. Three mid-winter reports, totaling 125 birds, came from the *Cincinnati* area, and returnees were probably involved in **B. Shively**'s report of 21 at KPWA on 22 Feb, and **D. Kramer**'s sighting of a likely local pair and 13 likely migrants at *Killbuck WA* 24 Feb.

**Semipalmated Plover:** One discovered by the OWRN census team 7 Dec probably represented a new late record for the state.



A happy killdeer pair frolic in Muskingum County. Photo by Robert Royse in late February 2004.

**Killdeer:** The EFSP CBC's total of 100 on 21 Dec was quite noteworthy. Mid-winter reports further north included three in *Fairfield* 10 Jan (**J. Watts**), three to seven in *Butler* 10 Jan-30 Jan (**M. Busam**), four at *Caesar Ck SP* 14-21 Jan (**L. Gara**), two in *Holmes* 19-20 Jan (**E. Schlabach**), and two 24 Jan at *Walborn Res.*, *Stark* (**B. Morrison**).

**Greater Yellowlegs:** One was heard for the *Adams* CBC of 14 Dec (**B. Master**), and a yellowlegs sp. in *Athens* 10 Dec was likely this species (**L. Andrews**).

**Purple Sandpiper:** Three remained at *Conneaut* 8 Dec (**P. Gardner**), and one was at *HBSP* 11-12 Dec (ph **L. Rosche**).

Another foraging on the ice at *Eastlake* was quite noteworthy on the late date of 25 Jan (**J. Kuenzli**).

**Dunlin:** The ONWRC had one at *Ottawa* 7 Dec, and **P. Gardner** three at *Conneaut* and one at *Walnut Beach, Ashtabula*, the following day. Birds were reported at *Conneaut* the longest, with four there 29 Dec (**C. Holt**) and two on 3 Jan (**J. Pogacnik**).

**Wilson's Snipe:** Later migrant high count was six in *Carroll* 7 Dec. January birds are rarer, and included two in Dayton the 1<sup>st</sup> (**D. Dister**) and singletons in *Wayne* the 10<sup>th</sup> (**S. Snyder**), *Geauga* the 21<sup>st</sup> (**P. Lozano**), SVWA the 24<sup>th</sup> (**R. Kolde**), and *Holmes* the 28<sup>th</sup> (**G. Miller**). One in *Butler* on 11 Feb (**M. Busam**) must have endured the winter here, but six at MWW 28 Feb were more likely early arrivals (**N. Cade**).

**American Woodcock:** On the late side were three 14 Dec in Columbus (**E. Grody**). One was detected at Firestone MP in Akron 31 Jan (**J. Reyda**, **E. Pierce**). First reports of probable returnees came 10 Feb from *Washington* (**S. Vincent**) and *Coshocton* (**G. Miller**).

**Pomarine Jaeger:** One enlivened the Lorain CBC 20 Dec (**J. Pogacnik**).



This third-winter "Nelson's" gull, a hybrid glaucous X herring, was one of several at East 72nd St. in Cleveland on 1 February 2004. Photo by John Pogacnik.

**Ring-billed Gull:** Their numbers, probably augmented by young birds gathering to retreat with deep cold, reached ~110,000 at Lorain 7 Jan (**V. Fazio**) and ~90% of an estimated 100,000 gulls in Cleveland 12 Jan (**K. Metcalf**). Earlier, 5508 on the Western Hamilton CBC of 21 Dec was an all-time record. **J. Pogacnik** tallied 8960 passing LSR 22 Feb.

**California Gull:** Birds were well documented in Lorain (ad basic) on 3 Jan, and in Cleveland (third-winter) 8 Jan. Reports are with the OBRC.

**Herring Gull:** Both **K. Metcalf** (17 Jan) and **L. Rosche** (25 Jan) estimated the E 72<sup>nd</sup> St flock at

58



Guarding a morsel, this third-winter "Nelson's" gull, a hybrid glaucous X herring, was repeatedly seen at East 72nd St. in Cleveland. Photo by Gary Meszaros on 19 January 2004.

**Laughing Gull:** Akron's bird of the fall persisted through 1 Dec (**G. Bennett**).

**Franklin's Gull:** An imm bird made the 20 Dec Lorain CBC list.

**Little Gull:** A second-year bird was another singularity for the Lorain CBC 20 Dec.

**Bonaparte's Gull:** Excellent numbers persisted until the onset of bitter cold. **V. Fazio** estimated 38,000 at Lorain Harbor 7 Jan, and **L. Rosche** 2500 at E 72<sup>nd</sup> St in Cleveland 13 Jan, where only a single straggler was noted by **C. Holt** on 25 Jan. Where they went is hinted at by **S. Landes**'s sighting of three in Columbus 13 Jan, and **C. Carver**'s of four on 16 Jan at EFSP.



This apparent hybrid herring X lesser black-backed gull was at Lorain Harbor, 29 February 2004. Photo by John Pogacnik.

The Ohio Cardinal



Typical first-winter glaucous gull at East 72nd St. in Cleveland on 1 February 2004. Photo by Gary Meszaros.

birds generated 15 reports from Cleveland and Lorain, with the latest of two adults at the latter location 22 Feb (**J. Pogacnik**).

**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** Inland reports came from Berlin Res 18 Dec (**B. Morrison**) and Castalia 8 Feb (**J. Burtt**). One made the 14 Dec Toledo CBC, but 24 reports arose from the Central Basin, with a minimum of ten birds. High count seven (four ad, 2W, 1W) seen at E 72<sup>nd</sup> St in Cleveland 22 Feb (**J. Pogacnik**).

**Glaucous Gull:** Plentiful this season, this big gull had 71 reports from *Lucas* to *Ashtabula*, and a high count of 10+ birds in Cleveland 24 Jan (**J. Pogacnik**). At least five "Nelson's gulls," herring X glaucous hybrids, were found and photographed during the period, three (1W, 2W, and 3W) in Cleveland on 1 Feb and the last 29 Feb at Lorain (both **Pogacnik**).

**Great Black-backed Gull:** Unprecedented numbers of this, the world's largest gull species, gathered in Cleveland in January, peaking at 1500+ the 25<sup>th</sup> (**L. Rosche**). In the Sandusky Bay area, ~750 was an

10,000+, while **V. Fazio** judged there to have been 20,000+ in Sandusky Bay 7 Jan. **B. Morrison** discovered an albino bird at E. 72<sup>nd</sup> 9 Jan.

**Thayer's Gull:** Unusual indeed was an adult in *Logan* 6 Dec (ph, **T. Shively**). A minimum of five birds were represented in 23 reports from the Lake Erie shore, with maxima of three at E. 72 on several occasions, and the latest report of two adults there 22 Feb (**J. Pogacnik**).

**Iceland Gull:** A minimum of three



An adult glaucous gull in a shouting match with a great black-backed gull at East 72nd St. in Cleveland on 20 January 2004. Photo by Gary Meszaros.



Unprecedented were over 1000 greater black-backed gulls among the throngs at East 72nd St. in Cleveland during January 2004. These few were captured on film by Gary Meszaros on 6 January 2004.

excellent number for 2 Jan (**V. Fazio**). A new southernmost Ohio record was established with a first-winter bird in Gallipolis, *Gallia* 27 Feb (**H. Slack**), previously discovered over the River itself 24 Feb by **W. Argabrite**. An apparent herring X great black-backed hybrid, possibly the same as last winter's, was seen at E 72 on 17 Jan (**K. Metcalf**) and 1 Feb (**J. Pogacnik**).

**Black-legged Kittiwake:** Rare, an imm passed LSR in *Lake* 13 Jan (**J. Pogacnik**).

**Barn Owl:** Three CBCs in *Holmes* and *Tuscarawas* reported 18 owls, including a remarkable 11 on the 26 Dec Ragersville count. Another came from the Kingston CBC, with one in *Pickaway*. **G. Miller** reported a pair incubating in *Tuscarawas* by 11 Feb.

**Eastern Screech-Owl:** Forty-two on the 14 Dec Toledo CBC was a good number.

**Snowy Owl:** No reports this season, save for a one-day wonder photographed 23 Jan on a roadside fencepost in *Coshocton* (**C. Crook, L.E. Yoder**).



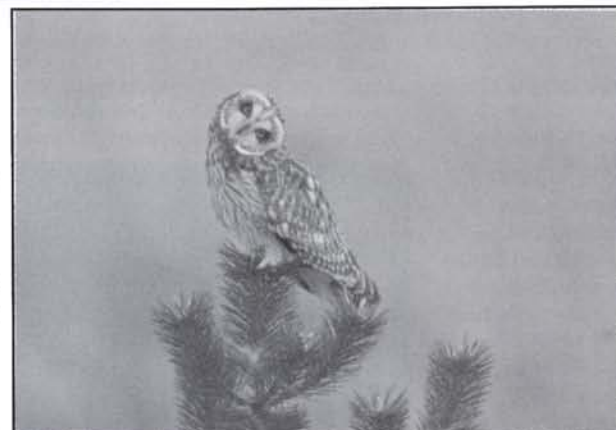
This snowy owl was located east of Coshocton on 3 January 2004. Photo contributed by Leroy E. Yoder.



These long-eared owls grudgingly accommodated Craig Rieker for a photo 1 February 2004.

**Long-eared Owl:** Reports totaling at least 100 individuals emanated from *Cuyahoga, Darke, Delaware, Hancock, Hardin, Holmes, Logan, Lorain, Lucas, Muskingum, Ottawa, Pickaway, Tuscarawas, Union, Williams,* and *Wyandot*. Rather than an explosion in the wintering population of

this species, these reports may simply reflect the widespread quiet presence of these owls in suitable habitats in Ohio. Some misidentifications as short-eared owls are apparently taking place as well. Systematic surveys have radically revised understanding of the wintering status of this species in other Midwestern states, as they might here as well. There is fair evidence that roosts of this species grow during the period, as the one at Killdeer Plains WA had reached 26 birds by 22 Feb (**J. Larson**), twelve of which seemed less tolerant of human presence than the others.



This short-eared owl entertained photographer Robert Roysse in Muskingum County, February 2004.

**Short-eared Owl:** Reports of 150+ short-ears came from *Butler, Clinton, Columbiana, Franklin, Hamilton, Holmes, Lucas, Marion, Muskingum, Noble, Union,* and *Wyandot* throughout the period, with high count of 31+ in *Muskingum* 23 Feb (**R. Roysse**).

**Northern Saw-whet Owl:** Ten-plus reported, but we have no idea how many are really around. Many have prolonged stays, such as the Killdeer individuals, two in *Tuscarawas* 26 Dec-eop (**J.A. Miller**), one in a Columbus suburb 25 Jan-20 Feb (**J. Kuenzli, D. Fisher**), and one at Gilmore Ponds again 14 Feb-eop (**B. Lacker, M. Busam**).

**Rufous Hummingbird:** The recent proliferation of records of *Selasphorus* hummingbirds in Ohio has been abrupt, and explaining this will require time. We had a total of thirteen in Ohio this fall and winter, one more than last year's record total. Birds confirmed as *S. rufus*, either through careful field observation



Diagnostic photo of tail feathers, by Allen Chartier on 15 Dec2003, of state-record longest-staying rufous hummingbird (Darke Co). Note that R2 (second tail feather from the right) is "notched,"--i.e., not as fully rounded on the outer tip as on the inner.

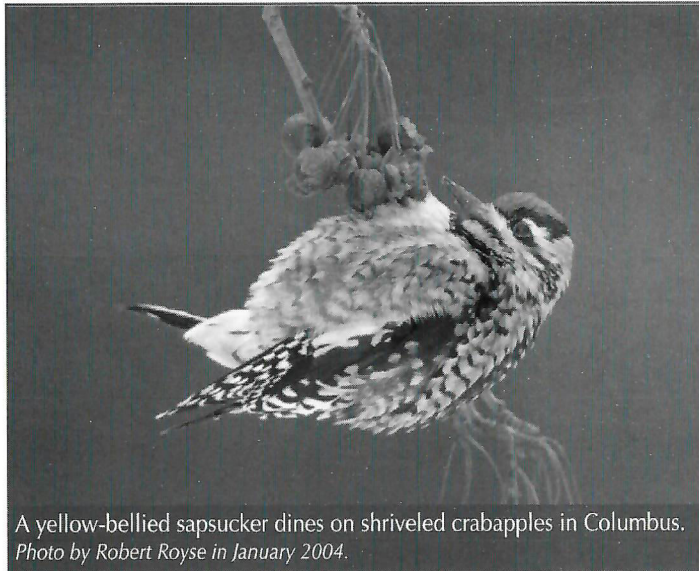
or in-hand examination, numbered seven, and an eighth report has emerged. This winter's records of *S. rufus* follow: juv ♀ Blendon Wds MP in *Franklin* 1 Nov-25 Dec (**S. Dalton**, m obs); ad ♂ Bath Twp, *Summit*, late Sep-1 Jan (**C&A Miller fide J. Brumfield**, m obs); juv/♀ Carlisle Twp, *Lorain*, 18 Oct-1 Dec (**C. Priebe fide L. Rosche**); juv ♂ Salt Ck Twp, *Muskingum*, early Nov-26 Dec (**M&W Wise fide A. Chartier**); juv ♀ mid-Oct-16 Jan in Middletown, *Butler* (**R. Sauer fide A. Chartier**); juv ♀ early Sept-23 Jan Greenville, *Darke* (**new record late date for Ohio**) (**C. Fetzner fide A. Chartier**); juv ♀



Maumee, *Lucas* 24 Nov-20 Dec (**L. Fayer-weather** *fide* **A. Chartier**); finally, a belated new report of a second-year ♀ at Leesburg, *Highland* 17 Oct-22 Jan (*fide* **A. Chartier**).

**Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird:** Three reported fall birds, one each from *Ross*, *Carroll*, and *Montgomery*, did not persist into the winter period. One, the *Stark* individual in Massillon, persisted through 6 Jan (**M. Knowles**, **N. Lowe**). A new one-day wonder appeared, and was photographed in *Mongomery* 4 Dec (**R. Dougherty**)

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** Over fifty reported. Eleven were found on two CBCs covering parts of *Franklin* 14 and 20 Dec. Fourteen on the *Cincinnati* CBC 28 Dec was good, but four on the *Toledo* CBC of 14 Dec was better. Few were reported from the north in Jan and early Feb, the latest birds on 1 Jan in *Stark* (**E. Snively**) and *Geauga* (**K. Metcalf**). One in *Noble* 23 Jan (**B. Morrison**) was noteworthy.



A yellow-bellied sapsucker dines on shriveled crabapples in Columbus. Photo by Robert Royse in January 2004.

**Northern Flicker:** A group of ten in *Hocking* as late as 25 Jan was noteworthy (**P. Knoop**).

**Eastern Phoebe:** The northernmost came from e. *Holmes* 17 Dec (**E. Schlabach**), and during a cold snap one in *Clermont* on 28 Jan was worthy of note (**K. Robinson**). Another elsewhere in *Clermont* on 22 Feb (**B. Lacker**) was likely a returnee.



This loggerhead shrike was photographed by Troy Shively at Killdeer WA 14 December 2003.

**Loggerhead Shrike:** One was photographed not far from a northern shrike in *KPWA* on 13 Dec; later relocated 18 Dec. Details with the *OBRC*.

**Northern Shrike:** Fourteen reported, from *Cuyahoga*, *Holmes Lake*, *Lorain*, *Lucas*, *Marion*, *Montgomery*, *Muskingum*, *Ottawa*, and *Wyandot*. The *Montgomery* bird was the southernmost, found by **T. Shively** 20 Feb. *Bird Studies Canada* estimates the world population of this species at only

Reported occasionally during prairie falcon vigils east of The Wilds in Muskingum County, this northern shrike was photographed by Bob Atkins on 26 February 2004.

210,000, a fourth that of three-toed woodpecker.

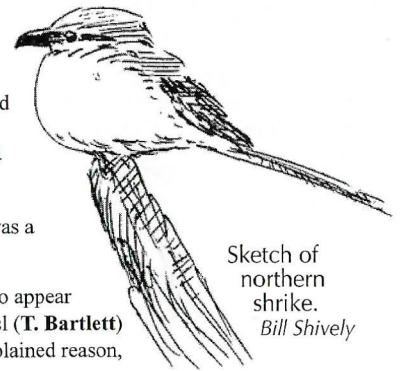
**American Crow:** **F. Renfrow** counted the *Cincinnati* roost on 10 Feb, which as recently as three years ago had numbered ~70,000, and came up with an estimate of 18,000. On the other hand, 400+ gathered around a single deer carcass on 24 Jan in *Guernsey* (**B. Whan**) was rather encouraging.

**Horned Lark:** A count of 550 in *Reily Twp*, *Butler* 1 Feb was a good one (**P. Wharton**).

**Tufted Titmouse:** Seldom does this common species need to appear in these pages, but a singing male found 24 Jan on *Kelleys Isl* (**T. Bartlett**) was exceptional in a locale where it is, for some as yet unexplained reason, virtually unknown.

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** Fairly widespread in habitat this season, as opposed to last year, bearing out the recent every-other-year cycle of this species.

**Brown Creeper:** Wintered widely in small numbers, with high count of 11 on a *Hancock* census of 18 Dec (*fide* **B. Hardesty**).



Sketch of northern shrike. Bill Shively

**Carolina Wren:** Still recovering, or perhaps expanding, in the north. **L. Rosche** called their numbers "excellent" in the NE, and the 14 Dec *Toledo* CBC tallied an excellent 45 in the NW.

**Winter Wren:** Spread thinly but widely. The 14 Dec *Toledo* CBC had seven, and **E. Schlabach** reported one actually inside his shop in *Tuscarawas* on 20 Jan.

**Marsh Wren:** The *Toledo* CBC crew found one 14 Dec, and **R. Counts** one in *Wyandot* 26 Dec (refound 2 Jan by **S. Snyder**). At least two other CBC reports.

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** Six reported from the southern tier of counties. Further north were one at *HBSP* 28 Dec (**G. Meszaros**), one in *Ross* 3 Jan (**J. McCormac**), and one 1 Feb at *EHSP* (**T. Bartlett**).

**Hermit Thrush:** Forty-three reported beyond CBCs, 28 from the southwest. **J. Watts** had one in *Clear Ck MP*, *Hocking* 2 Dec, **D. Chasar** one in the *CVNP* 14 Dec, **L. Rosche** one in *N. Perry*, *Lake* 27 Dec, **L.E. Yoder** one on 2 Jan and



This northern mockingbird has wintered three years in a row at Mentor Lagoons Park in Lake County. Photo by Gary Meszaros on 6 Jan 2004.

two on 10 Jan in *Coshocton*, **R. Rogers** one in *Hocking* 21 Jan, and **C. Wolcott** another in Columbus 27 Jan. As usual, Kelleys Island took the cake, with 23 hermit thrushes on a chilly 24 Jan (**T. Bartlett**).

**Gray Catbird:** Ten reports came from the far south, and farther north one was in *Williams* 14 Dec (**L. Ohman**), another in *Lake* 20 Dec (**J. Pogacnik**), one in *Wayne* 27 Dec (**T. Leslie**), and one at Pickerel Ck WA 2 Jan (**V. Fazio**). A catbird was in *Hamilton* through 14 Feb (**A. Gaynor**).

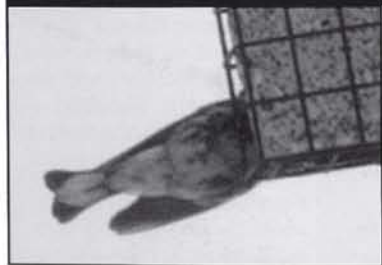
**Brown Thrasher:** Seven were reported after the really cold weather set in, the northernmost of them one in *Franklin* 30 Jan (**R. Thorn**).

**American Pipit:** Defied conventional understanding even more than last winter. With only a few CBC results available, reported December numbers totaled 178, led by 46 on the Millersburg CBC of 16 Dec and 76 on the EFSP CBC of 21 Dec. January reports totaled 31 (27 of them past mid-month), including 20+ on 22 Jan in *Tuscarawas* (**W. Sarno**) and three in *Butler* 31 Jan (**M. Busam**). February birds amounted to 36, led by 28 probable migrants on the 29<sup>th</sup> (**E. Schlabach**) in *Holmes*.

**Orange-crowned Warbler:** **R. Royle** discovered one in Columbus 8 Dec that persisted through the 15<sup>th</sup>. Another was in *Tuscarawas* from early Dec (**E. Schlabach**) through 11 Feb (**G. Miller**); a first-winter ♂ of *orestera*, one of the Rocky Mtns/Great Basin race (**Schlabach**), it represented Ohio's latest, surpassing the previous record by one day.



Photographed by Sean Zadar at his feeder in Cuyahoga Co. 24 Jan 2004, this "Audubon's" form of yellow-rumped warbler was a rare occurrence of this western form.



**Field Sparrow:** The high count of 30 came on the *Adams* CBC of 14 Dec.

**Lark Sparrow:** Extremely unusual was one found and photographed 21 Dec for the Western Hamilton CBC (**W. Wauligman**). One of two documented Ohio winter records.

**Yellow Warbler:** Also phenomenal was a first-year ♂ seen 1 Nov through 27 Dec at a feeder in *e. Holmes* (**J. Beachy, E. Schlabach**, ph). Very few winter records of this one.

**"Audubon's" Warbler:** One of the western race *aububoni* of the yellow-rumped warbler, quite rare in Ohio, frequented **S. Zadar's** suet feeder 24-26 Jan; it was photographed and subsequently determined to be an adult ♂.

**Pine Warbler:** Two males were in song at Winton Wds in *Hamilton* 18 Feb, representing the second-earliest arrival of the species ever recorded (**F. Renfrow**).

**Palm Warbler:** One came to a feeder in Walnut Creek, *Holmes* 11-31 Jan (**J.A. Miller**) for a very choice record.

**Common Yellowthroat:** Four were reported during Dec, but only one in Jan—in the CVNP on the 10<sup>th</sup> (**D. Chasar**).

**American Tree Sparrow:** This attractive species was customarily present in good numbers, such as 307 on the 1 Feb ONWRC.

**Chipping Sparrow:** After the first week of Jan, only three were reported: one, continuously 26 Dec-22 Feb in *Hamilton* (**N. Keller**), on 1 Feb in *Tiffin* (**T. Bartlett**), and another 28 Feb at *MWW* (**N. Cade**).

**Savannah Sparrow:** Deep-winter records included five on 1 Jan in *Holmes* (**E. Schlabach**), one at KPWA 2 Jan (**D. Sanders**), three in *Stark* 6 Jan (**B. Morrison**), six in *Tuscarawas* 24 Jan (**Schlabach**), one in *Wyandot* 30 Jan (**J. Larson**), and one in *Secor Pk* in *Lucas* 2 Feb (**T. Kemp**).

**Grasshopper Sparrow:** One at HBSP 27 Dec (**K. Metcalf**) was quite late.

**Henslow's Sparrow:** One was documented for the Cincinnati CBC of 28 Dec. If accepted, this will be Ohio's second documented winter Henslow's sparrow.

**Fox Sparrow:** Nineteen reported in the Cincinnati during the period, six in Dayton 10 Jan (**D. Dister**), and a surprising seven wintered in Toledo (**T. Kemp**). Another dozen were reported from *Cuyahoga, Lucas, Franklin, and Hocking* during the period.

**Lincoln's Sparrow:** At least three CBCs reported Lincoln's—on 14 Dec the Toledo and Lake Erie Isl counts, and on 16 Dec the Millersburg count.

**Swamp Sparrow:** The Toledo CBC's count of 285 birds was extraordinary, but they had other enormous sparrow numbers as well. **J. Watts** kicked up 24 in *Franklin* 10 Jan, the same day **D. Chasar** had 2-3 in *Jaite* in the CVNP, and **D. Overacker** two in *Champaign*. **T. Bartlett** reported 17 from balmy Kelleys Island 24 Jan.

**White-throated**



This photo of a lark sparrow was obtained 21 Dec 2003 at Rumpke Park in Hamilton Co. by Wayne Wauligman.



Robert Royle snapped a shot of this white-throated sparrow bundled up for the snow in Columbus during January 2004.



Lapland longspurs put on quite a show along TH 112 in Wyandot Co. Robert Royle took this portrait there during January 2004.

**Sparrow:** Present in good numbers this season, a particularly good one being 141 on the 14 Dec Toledo CBC.

**White-crowned Sparrow:** Not to be outdone by its congener, white-crowns numbered an excellent 225 for the Toledo CBC of 14 Dec.

**Lapland Longspur:** Agricultural improvements at a favored spot in *Marion* adjacent to KPWA drove Laplands away, but birds were in *Wyandot*: **R. Counts** counted 300+ there on 16 Jan, then 725, some in full song, there 24 Feb, and 1100+ there the following day.

Elsewhere, nine were in *Holmes* 30 Jan (**E. Schlabach**), 80 in *Butler* 1 Feb (**P. Wharton**), and the high count of 1500+ over SW *Lucas* on 29 Feb (**T. Kemp**).



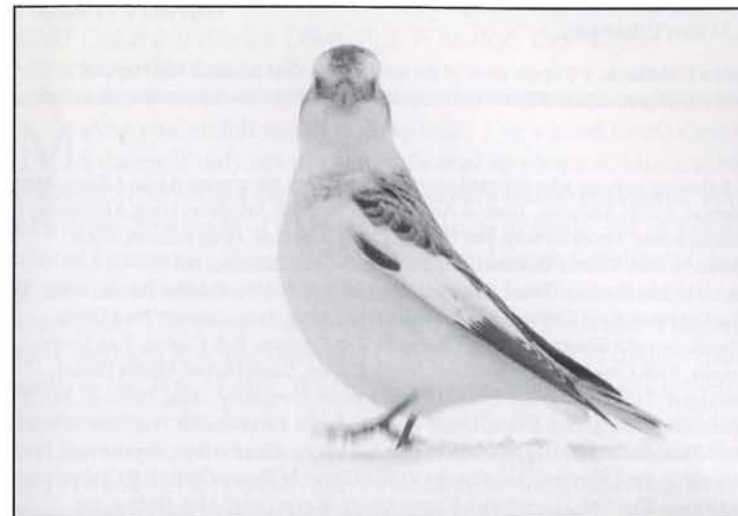
There's nothing like a small pile of manure to gather a crowd, as snow buntings and horned larks line up for tickets. Photographer Bob Finkelstein was in the thick of it along SR 18 south of Bellevue on 31 January 2004.

**Snow Bunting:** Good numbers by mid-winter: ~100 were in *Portage* 18-20 Jan (**L. Rosche**), "hundreds" near GLSM 25 Jan (**J. Bowers**), 700+ in *Holmes* 29 Jan (**B. Jackson**), then ~500 in a *Wayne* flock 31 Jan (**E. Schlabach**). Elsewhere, 150 were in *Mahoning* 31 Jan (**B&D Lane**), 402 in *Butler* 1 Feb (**P. Wharton**), and 300 in *Wyandot* 7 Feb (**R. Counts**); **Counts** later observed 100+ perching uncharacteristically on utility wires there 28 Feb.

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** A very rare winter bird, a female was satisfactorily described by **L. Brumbaugh** at a Caesar Ck SP sunflower-seed feeder 18 Jan.

**Indigo Bunting:** Another winter rarity, an adult ♀ was described at Resthaven WA in *Erie* 1 Jan (**V. Fazio**).

**Dickcissel:** One photographed at a feeder 23 Jan in *Knox* (**B. Glick**) remained 3 Jan (**N. Lowe**). At a feeder in *Wyandot* was another 25 Jan (**K. Fredritz fide T. Bartlett**). A third was seen but once in *Athens* 4 Feb (**S. Schafer**). Three reports in one winter is highly unusual, but the number of attentive and



Snow buntings, like this individual, were regular visitors along TH 112 in Wyandot Co. Photo by Robert Royse during January 2004.

knowledgeable observers is growing.

**Eastern Meadowlark:** The *Adams* CBC tallied 123 on 14 Dec, and on 26 Dec 34 were at KPWA (**R. Lowry**). The VOA harbored 30 (**N. Cade**) and e. *Holmes* 45 (**E. Schlabach**) on 1 Jan, an area in *Seneca* 23 on 24 Jan (**T. Bartlett**), and Meigs Twp in *Muskingum* ~100 on 29 Feb (**B. Whan**).

**Rusty Blackbird:** Mid-winter birds included one at SVWA 1 Jan (**D. Dister**), two in *Clark* 13 Jan (**D. Overacker**), and ~50 at KPWA 11 Jan (**R. Sempier**).

**Brewer's Blackbird:** Five (three ♀) were reported in *Wyandot* 26 Dec (**R. Counts**), one for the Gypsum CBC on 1 Jan (**C. Rieker**), and two far to the east in *Columbiana* 13 Feb (**C. Holt**).

**Common Grackle:** Dwarfing numbers of all other species on the Kingston CBC was an enormous flock estimated at 85,000 in *Ross* 3 Jan (**B. Whan et al.**).

**Brown-headed Cowbird:** **K. Metcalf** reported the last to depart from *Geauga* on 24 Dec. **E. Snively** encountered 300+ in *Wayne* 16 Jan.

**Purple Finch:** Numbers up this winter, with more in the south as usual. Up to five were in *Coshocton* 5&6 Jan (**L. Deininger**). Six were in *Hocking* (**P. Knoop**) and two in *Logan* 6 Dec (**T. Shively**). Up to 40 were seen through the period at Caesar Ck Sp feeders (m obs). The *Adams* CBC (which has never missed the species, and has a record count of 261) had 51 on 14 Dec. Jan 24 brought 11 to SVWA (**R. Kolde**) and three to Kelleys Isl (**T. Bartlett**). Five were at Slate Run MP in *Pickaway* 30 Jan (**A. Haslage**), one was a find in *Van Wert* 25 Feb (**J. Perchalski**), and five were in *Clermont* 29 Feb (**D. Morse**).

**White-winged Crossbill:** Reports of a male 7-22 Dec, and a female 7 Dec-13 Jan, came from *Richland* (**J. Herman fide R. Harlan**).

**Common Redpoll:** Scattered and seldom numerous. Reports from *Cuyahoga*, *Erie*, *Hamilton*, *Holmes*, *Lucas*, *Medina*, *Paulding*, *Preble*, *Richland*, and *Wyandot*. High count 20 on a single occasion in *Hamilton* 22 Jan (**J. Cade**). Two in *Paulding* 9 Dec were the **Dunakins'** third in 24 years. Recorded as far south as Georgia this winter.

**Pine Siskin:** Local and fairly numerous. Good counts included 30 in *Logan* 1 Dec (**T. Shively**), 30+ in Columbus 8 Dec (**R. Cressman**), 45 in *Lucas* in early Jan (**T. Kemp**), 50 on 10 Jan in *Hamilton* (**L. Brumbaugh**), ~40 in Oak Openings MP in *Lucas* 23 Jan (**J. Watts**), and 27 in Mohican SP 28 Jan (**G. Miller**). Became scarcer in Feb.

**Evening Grosbeak:** **B. Jacksy** reported a ♀ in *Lucas* 12 Dec, and **D. Horn** one at KPWA 29 Jan. All

other reports came from in or near Mohican SP during Jan (*Ashland and Knox*), with a high count of two at a feeder in the park 31 Jan (**T. Bartlett**).

Exotic species: **Eurasian Goldfinch**: a ♀ spent most of the winter at feeders south of Mt. Hope in *Holmes*; photographed 31 Jan by **B. Glick**. Almost certainly an escaped bird.

We are grateful to the following persons who reported observations during the season: Angie Adkins, Matt Anderson, Nancy Anderson, Lynda Andrews, Thomas Archdeacon, Wendell Argabrite, Hank Armstrong, Tom Bartlett, Erich Baumgardner, James Beachy, Jim Bednarik, Jon Benedetti, Greg Bennett, Chris Betrus, Brad Bolton, Mike Bolton, Charlie Bombaci, Jill Bowers, David Brinkman, Jeff Brown, Lori Brumbaugh, Jen Brumfield, Gina Buckey, Chuck Buechele, Don Burlett, Jed Burt, Mike Busam, Jason Cade, Neill Cade, Craig Caldwell, Kyle Carlsen, Ron Carter, Craig Carver, John Castrale, Paul Chad, Allen Chartier, Ann Chasar, Dwight Chasar, Suzanne Clingman, Tim Colburn, Bob Conlon, Sam Corbo, Ralph Corley, Rick Counts, Rich Cressman, Chris Crook, Becky Cullen, Sarah Dalton, Donna Daniel, Laura Daniele, Leo Deininger, Fred Dinkelbach, David Dister, Russell Dougherty, Doug Dunakin, Micki Dunakin, Curt Dusthimer, Jason Estep, Bob Evans, Ginny Fantetti, Linda Fayerweather, Vic Fazio, Duane Ferris, Cathy Fetzer, Bob Finkelstein, Mike Flynn, Bob Foppe, Tom Ford, Kim Fredritz, Frank Frick, Jim Fry, Larry Gara, Lou Gardella, Paul Gardner, Ann Gayner, Dante Giancola, Bruce Glick, Jeff Grabmeier, Darlena Graham, Bret Graves, Charlotte Greenfelder, Elayna Grody, Kevin Groff, Don Hadley, Joe Hammond, Sharon Hanse, Lois Harder, Betty Hardesty, Rob Harlan, Andrea Haslage, Jim Haw, Christine Hawley, Jeff Hays, Bill Heck, Stan Hedeon, Dave Helm, Michele Hendrick, John Herman, Jim Hickman, Hank Hiris, Sally Hiris, Dave Hochadel, Judy Hochadel, Levi Hochstetler, Dick Hoffman, Jean Hoffman, Craig Holt, Dave Horn, Bill Jackson, Bob Jacksy, Julie Karlson, Ned Keller, Tom Kemp, Isaac Kerns, Molly Kerry, Everitt Kitchen, Ron Kolde, Paul Knoop Jr, Marijo Knowles, Dan Kramer, John Kraus, Mike Kroeger, John Kuenzli, Bob Lacker, Steve Landes, Bob Lane, Denise Lane, Jason Larson, Amy Lavy, Jay Lehman, Gabe Leidy, Tim Leslie, Greg Links, Doreene Linzell, Norman Lowe, Rob Lowry, Paula Lozano, Bernard Master, Charlotte Mathena, Jim McCormac, Kathy McDonald, Eric McElroy, Joe McMahon, Julie Means, Brian Menker, Gary Meszaros, Kevin Metcalf, Jim McCormac, Bruce Miller, Greg Miller, Kent Miller, Ben Morrison, Donald Morse, Heather Nagy, Ed Neubauer, Melvin Nisely, Lach Ohman, Ann Oliver, Helen Ostermiller, Ken Ostermiller, Doug Overacker, Al Parker, John Perchalski, Stacy Peterson, Haans Petruschke, Ed Pierce, Bob Placier, Don Plant, John Pogaenik, Cathy Priebe, Scott Reeves, Frank Renfrow, Steve Richards, Richard Rickard, Craig Rieker, Bill Rinehart, Bryn Roberts, Keith Robinson, Randy Rogers, Mary Anne Romito, Tom Romito, Ed Roush, Larry Rosche, Bob Royse, Dave Russell, Dan Sanders, Randy Sanders, Bob Sargent, Willie Sarno, R.G. Sauer, Steve Schafer, Regina Schieltz, Jessica Schultz, Ron Sempier, Bill Shively, Troy Shively, John Shrader, Diana Shuler, Thomas Simmons, Harry Slack, Tim Smart, Dave Smith, Nick Smith, Tom Smith, Elaine Snively, Su Snyder, Doug Snapp, Chris Spagnoli, Brad Sparks, Bill Stanley, Jay Stenger, Mike Sweeney, John Switzer, Sue Tackett, Carol Takacs, Rob Thorn, Elliot Tramer, Jane Van Coney, Sandy Vincent, Sandy Wagner, Suzanne Wagner, John Watts, Wayne Wauligman, Bill Whan, Pete Whan, Paul Wharton, John Wilson, Connie Wolcott, Alan Wormington, John Yochum, Leroy E. Yoder, Marvin Yoder, Sheryl Young, Sean Zadar, Bill Zimmerman, Mark Zloba. We gratefully acknowledge information received from the editors of *The Bobolink* and internet resources managed by Ned Keller and Chuck Anderson. Thanks to Allen Chartier for tireless labors and first-rate documentations for many of the season's hummingbird records. 🐦

## Further Afield

### Robert Harlan

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

Maybe you've followed the same trail. I've visited South Carolina's I'on Swamp, if only out of tribute. Scared up plenty of hunters, but no Bachman's warblers. I've visited the pastures of western Galveston Island, Texas, if only out of tribute. Saw wads of whimbrels and scads of cattle, but no Eskimo curlews. I've visited Louisiana's Honey Island Swamp and South Carolina's Congaree Swamp, if only out of tribute. Saw a pile of pileateds, but the ivory-billed somehow eluded me. I've even made the pilgrimage to the Passenger Pigeon Memorial at the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden, if only out of tribute. Doffed my cap (a rarity in itself) to Martha, the last of her kind, who lived in captivity all her life until succumbing at the Zoo in 1914. Did the same for Lady Jane and Incas, the world's last known pair of Carolina parakeets, who also lived and died at the Cincinnati Zoo, in 1917 and 1918, respectively. I visited these sites, expecting nothing, and saw what I expected to see. I think that you might do the same, if only out of tribute.

Sometimes it's altogether too easy to forget *why* you do what you do. As Editor of *The Ohio Cardinal* from 1991 through 1996, until just recently Ohio compiler for *North American Birds*, and currently as a member of the Ohio Bird Records Committee (OBRC), and as, it has been my responsibility and privilege, in conjunction with the efforts of others, to monitor Ohio's birding records; it is a responsibility and a challenge that I take seriously. But frankly, the task is time-consuming, endless and monotonous, and can grow somewhat numbing over a period of years. I realize that bird populations and movements are never static, and their fluctuations always demand careful attention. But for the most part, these movements are readily predictable, coming and going at about the same time, year after year, and in roughly the same numbers, given similar conditions. Of course, various populations trend upwards or downwards, but they usually do so quite slowly, and sometimes almost imperceptibly. But it is precisely these slow, almost imperceptible changes that can be the most pernicious, sneaking up on us and melting away what we didn't even know was in danger.

Personally, I found that years of record keeping had almost served to anesthetize me. Fourteen years is barely a hiccup in the big picture of birding history, but it is long enough to instill a sense of sameness and repetition, despite the vagaries of each particular migration season, and despite the occasional spicy dash of rarities. But I'm glad to say it took only a single visit to Columbus this January to remind me *why* I do what I do, and hopefully, in some small degree, it will also encourage you to do what you can do.

This particular visit was to the Museum of Biological Diversity, part of the College of Biological Sciences at The Ohio State University, as a participant on a recent Kirtland Bird Club field trip. In preparation for our visit, John Condit, our host and the Museum's Curator of Higher Vertebrates, made available a wide variety of bird specimens for our perusal, featuring all of Ohio's warbler species (including, Vol. 27, No. 2 ❖ Winter 2003-04

of all things, an unrecognized 1947 Washington County specimen of Swainson's warbler—Ohio has only one other specimen of a Swainson's Warbler, also from 1947!), a collection of vireo nests, and a handsome collection of dowitchers and shrikes, allowing for in-the-hand comparisons. But also lying on the countertop were specimens of even greater interest: a Bachman's warbler, an Eskimo curlew (collected in Ohio, by the way), an ivory-billed woodpecker, a passenger pigeon, and a Carolina parakeet. A dusky seaside sparrow, now considered a subspecies, added its lifeless form to the somber gathering. Of course, the pigeon and parakeet and the sparrow are all certainly extinct. The warbler, curlew and woodpecker, if they survive at all, exist only in a murky dreamer's dream on the edge of nothingness. Although the warbler has never officially been recorded in Ohio (it has nested as close to us as south-central Kentucky, however), the curlew, woodpecker, pigeon, and parakeet all occur on the official OBRC list of the birds of Ohio. In reality, it hardly matters which have been recorded here; what matters is that, in all likelihood, they will never be seen alive by anyone, anywhere, ever again.

I suppose it was the injustice that struck me at first, as I handled each specimen one by one—the thought that the actions and inactions taken by nameless others over the years have deprived us today of the opportunity to appreciate these species as they were meant to be appreciated. After a while, though, it occurred to me that although these specimens were silent, they could not be silenced. Their muted testimony will speak volumes to those who will listen. It is our responsibility to hear what they have to say. If I hear them correctly, they wish us to appreciate their loss, and to appreciate our loss, and to take the steps necessary to ensure that their story is never forgotten, and never repeated.

For some species teetering on the edge, the so-called “extinction vortex” may already be unavoidable. For others (the vast majority of species, thankfully) the odds are still in their favor. We can help keep it this way by monitoring and conserving all the species that are still here with us. This is a task that we all must share. Our individual backgrounds are unimportant. I am not a trained scientist—but I don't need to be. I am not an activist—I've always been low-key. I am not a self-promoter—it just goes against the grain. I am not a rich man, with money to spare—but I do what I can, when I can. But if you can use any of these attributes for the greater good, that's fine with me. You know where you fit, and what you need to do. Speaking personally, over the years I believe I have accumulated a good working knowledge regarding the abundance and distribution of the birds of Ohio. I am also analytical, and occasionally have been accused of being a tad obsessive (this has occurred five times, and I have a detailed record of each). These traits naturally led me into editing and compiling duties; I like to think that by using these skills, I have been able to uphold my part of the bargain. But enough of this self-promotion.

But where then to begin? Reporting bird observations to centralized record keepers is always a good start, and a worthy exercise, regardless of one's individual background. These records, when distilled, help to establish our current thinking on bird abundance and distribution, and simultaneously serve as benchmarks for future research. Every season, we take a snapshot (the seasonal summary) of each

species' ups and downs, and uniformities, and preserve this image by publishing the condensed results from many observers in the permanent, printed historical record. Although I'm sure many would disagree, I feel that the preservation of permanent data on internet web sites is inherently less desirable than preservation on the printed page. Long-term availability of these web sites is always in question. Also, text and graphics can easily be manipulated without any acknowledgement that such has taken place. I also note a pervasive, transient “anything goes” attitude on the web; this degree of casualness does not serve the historical record, our benchmark for future researchers, well. Obviously, there are exceptions, but my gut tells me to “get it on paper” whenever possible.

So what do these compilers and record keepers look for in the reports they receive? Although there are several different layers of reporting opportunities available (local, state, regional, national and international in scope), all compilers require each record to provide at least these basic pieces of information: the species, the number of individuals observed, the date of the observation, the site of the observation, and the name of the observer. Any other information, such as age and plumage of the bird, unusual behavior, etc. is also welcomed. Photographs are always desirable, especially for verification of rarities. Compilers have a much easier job when contributors submit their reports in the current American Ornithologists' Union checklist order, as portrayed, for example, in the current online version of the *Ohio Bird Records Committee Checklist of the Birds of Ohio*, at <http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/dnap/chcklist/BirdChecklist.pdf>.

Potential reporters are also very well served to familiarize themselves with their local, and if possible, statewide birdlife before submitting a report. Compilers are much more likely to accept an observation of a rarity when the observer's overall report indicates a familiarity with what is normally expected in their area. For instance, a report of three Carolina chickadees at Magee Marsh without any additional comment may be nothing more than a typo, but it also may indicate a lack of familiarity with chickadee ranges in Ohio. If this hypothetical observer was indeed unfamiliar with Ohio chickadee ranges, then it seems very likely that he/she did not make the necessary effort to distinguish between Carolina and the vastly more likely black-capped chickadee. Whenever an observer provides a wide-ranging seasonal report to the compiler, and includes observations of expected species, and not just a list of rarities, compilers can thereby gain a better grasp on the observer's experience. I feel that most compilers are much more appreciative when observers make an honest acknowledgement of *lack* of experience with a species, rather than with an attempt to portray more experience than has actually been gained. Inexperience is not necessarily or automatically a good reason for a compiler to *doubt* a record, but a bumpy reporting track record just might be. Always be conservative when submitting a report; if in doubt, leave it out. Our responsibility as reporters and as compilers is to provide our best and most accurate record for future researchers.

Any good-faith exchange of information is always appreciated and worth the effort, regardless of whether any particular record ultimately sees publication. For

instance, I actually once received a report of a pterodactyl. Doubting that this report was made in good faith, I chose not to publish it. It's true that I may have buried the scientific breakthrough of the year (or even the decade!) by not publishing the report, but I still have a high degree of confidence in my decision. Also, a pterodactyl isn't even a bird.

For printed media, space is always at a premium, and choices must be made. Compilers simply cannot print everything that is reported to them, and they must choose what they publish based on many factors, of which degree of rarity is only one. Rarity can take many forms—a species can be rare throughout the year, or perhaps be unusual in only a part of the state, or perhaps only at a particular time of year. Also, compilers typically seek records of unusually high or low numbers of individuals for a given site or date. All of these factors, any many more, must be considered when making each publish/don't publish decision. It is also necessary to keep in mind that the likelihood of any particular record being printed diminishes as the geographic scale of the publication grows wider; as the scale grows, so do the number of records competing against each other, with only the most noteworthy records acquiring the limited (and valuable) publication space. One definite advantage that internet archives have over print media is their ability to store a much larger volume of data. Unfortunately, the long-term availability of this information sometimes must come into question, as web sites disappear or become dormant.

As mentioned earlier, there are several different layers of reporting opportunities available. The first opportunity to report is on the local level. Here in the northeastern quadrant of Ohio, for instance, there are two excellent local journals, each covering a different group of counties. The stately *Cleveland Bird Calendar* has been dutifully recording the changing bird populations of the Cleveland area since 1905. Editor Larry Rosche (7473 Sylvan Drive, Kent, OH 44240, or email at [lorofs@aol.com](mailto:lorofs@aol.com)) would likely appreciate any reports you can provide from that region. Just to the south of the *Bird Calendar's* area, *The Bobolink* has covered the birds of east central Ohio since 1997 in a scholarly yet entertaining fashion. Bruce Glick (6692 C.R. 624, Millersburg, OH 44654, or email at [bhghlick@valkyrie.net](mailto:bhghlick@valkyrie.net)) is your man on the scene here.

In general, local publications and local compilers have a broad interest in all birds that occur in their areas. Of course, any potential reporter should always report what he or she believes to be of national or state significance to their local compilers, but local compilers are also interested in what might be unusual or interesting locally. For example, an American woodcock would be of local interest anywhere in Ohio in July, if only because they are difficult to find at that season. They are not rare, and in fact are common in many areas across the state in July, but just try finding one for an out-of-state birder in this month. A local publication would be more likely to print such an observation based on local interest alone, whereas it probably wouldn't see publication in a journal of wider geographic scope, due in part to space considerations, and in part to the species' overall range and abundance.

The next layer of reporting is the statewide layer. In Ohio, the seasonal reports in *The Ohio Cardinal* have filled that role for 25 years now. Over the past several

years, Editor Bill Whan has done yeoman's duty as compiler and author of the seasonal reports. He may be uncomfortable in printing these accolades here about himself, but let's see if he leaves them in; they are well-deserved. His postal and email addresses appear on the inside cover of every issue of this journal.

If by chance you don't usually read through the seasonal reports section, take a glance now. If you find yourself scanning for records that you had submitted, you've already done your job. If you find yourself thinking, "Hey, I had more Green-winged teals than what this dope lists as the high count", or "Here it says that least bitterns were reported in six counties, but this chump doesn't even mention the bird in Medina County that every single person on our field trip saw this past May." If you find that you can improve upon the published accounts, it has now become your job to do just that. Don't wait for someone else to report, even if the birds you saw were also seen by others, or were seen at a frequently-birded location, such as the Magee Marsh Bird Trail. Did you feel that? That is called responsibility, and it has just fallen on you.

On a regional and national scale, *North American Birds* magazine, once published by the National Audubon Society, but now overseen by the American Birding Association, is the quarterly journal of record. The United States is broken down into a variety of regions, based on political and physiographic boundaries. All of Ohio now falls in the unfortunately-named "Eastern Highlands and Upper Ohio River Valley Region", along with all of Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Up until a few years ago, Ohio was divided between the "Middlewestern Prairie Region" and the "Appalachian Region", but now we are all together in the single, new region. One of the new Regional Editors for our new region is Victor W. Fazio III ([dromaius@bright.net](mailto:dromaius@bright.net)). Vic would be happy to see any reports you can provide (hold the pterodactyls, please). His address is 18722 Newell St., Floor 2, Shaker Heights, OH 44122. Based on information from throughout the region, Editors choose the "noteworthy" of the noteworthy among all sightings reports, from all three states, and prepare their reports for publication in *North American Birds*.

It's not an easy task to get a record published in *North American Birds*. I used to think that I had won a small victory whenever one of my sightings made the cut. After considering the warbler, the curlew, the woodpecker, the pigeon, and the parakeet, I now believe that the mere act of submitting a report is a small victory in itself. I also believe it is now your turn. 🦉

# Can You Hear Prebasic Molt?

**Kevin E. Metcalf**

12459 Fowler's Mill Road  
Chardon, OH 44024

kem@clevelandmetroparks.com

## Introduction

Most birdwatchers have experienced those late spring and early summer mornings when the forests and meadows are brimming with birdsong. By late summer this auditory storm dissipates - slowly, almost imperceptibly - until the last drops of song must be consciously sought out. I developed an interest in noting the seasonal ebb and flow of Northeast Ohio's avian "sound-scape" over ten years ago.

After a few years of recording my observations, I learned that I could anticipate what weeks certain birds could be found singing, or not singing, in Northeast Ohio. Over time I focused my attention on the late summer decline of song. Patterns began to emerge and became predictable from year to year.

There is still a lot to be learned about the song "phenology" or seasonal changes in Ohio's birdsong. This article will only scratch the surface of a topic that is potentially vast. I hope that this basic treatment of a fascinating topic will spur others to take notice of the seasonal rhythms of birdsong in their own neighborhoods.

## Function of Song and General Seasonal Patterns

The basic function of male territorial song in passerines, which are also called "songbirds", is to attract a mate. Some near passerines, such as cuckoos and doves, and some other groups of birds have complex songs as well that probably serve the same function. Studies of some songbird species indicate that unmated males will sing more frequently than mated males. For example, male hooded warblers, upon arriving on a potential breeding territory will spend about 50 - 60% of their time singing. (Evans & Stutchbury 1994). Once a male songbird has mated and nesting has begun, the frequency of song given by that individual often declines.

Wood thrushes offer one fairly typical example of the annual cycle of song in our migratory breeding birds. Wood thrushes are very vocal just after they arrive on territory (usually late April or early May in Ohio) and sing frequently through the mating and incubation stages of breeding. Singing declines when the first brood of young is being fed (Watson 1987) -- frequently by the end of May through June. Wood thrushes will often attempt to raise two broods. By early August in northeastern Ohio song has greatly decreased, as most wood thrushes have completed nesting for the year. By mid-August most have stopped singing entirely (pers. obs.). Some may sing infrequently at dawn or dusk into September. Wood thrushes usually give call notes only during fall migration, and apparently sing little



Cerulean  
Warbler  
Jim Glover

METCALF

if at all on their tropical wintering grounds (Roth, Johnson, & Underwood 1996).

There are a few resident birds for which I have noted male territorial song every, or nearly every, month of the year. These birds include black-capped chickadee, tufted titmouse, Carolina wren, northern cardinal, song sparrow, and house finch. I suspect that mourning doves, red-winged blackbirds, European starlings, and American robins probably can be heard singing year round as well. It should be noted that the "songs" of black-capped chickadees ("fee-bee-bee") and tufted titmice ("peter-peter-peter") serve more than one social function and so do not necessarily indicate male territorial behavior.

## Late Summer Song Decline in Northeast Ohio

Typically in northeastern Ohio from mid-July through mid-August the chorus of songs of our flycatchers, vireos, thrushes, wrens, warblers, sparrows, and other songbirds greatly diminishes. Why bird song declines at this time seems obvious. The nesting season is ending. There is no longer a need to hold territory and advertise for a mate. Most of our breeding songbirds, many of which have migrated from other areas, sing until the last broods of young have been raised. After this, song quickly diminishes - no nesting, no territories, no song. End of story?

From late July through September of 2003 I attempted to document the post-breeding decline in bird song along two survey routes in northeastern Ohio. I concentrated my efforts between 6 August and 6 September, when I recorded the number of singing individual birds of each species on several dates. One route in Geauga County took me through diverse habitats, including successional old fields, wetlands and forests. Another route in North Chagrin Reservation of Cleveland Metroparks (Cuyahoga and Lake counties) ran primarily through forest, including beech-maple forest, with some hemlock ravine and edge habitats. The surveys were conducted between 7 a.m. and 9 a.m. They revealed a dramatic decline in singing individuals during the study period. On the Geauga route I noted a 78% decline in singing birds per hour, while there was a 64% decline in singing birds per hour on the North Chagrin route. Most bird species that were singing at the onset of the surveys were silent by late August or early September. (See Table 1)

### Table 1.

Following is a list of forty-five "songbird" species encountered on the Geauga County and North Chagrin Reservation routes surveyed in 2003 (study period ending 6 September), with dates of last song.

Mourning Dove\*: 9 August (singing can persist through at least mid August)  
Yellow-billed Cuckoo\*: 19 August  
Eastern Wood-Pewee: singing through end of study period.  
Acadian Flycatcher: 28 August  
Willow Flycatcher: 28 July  
Alder Flycatcher: 9 August  
Least Flycatcher: 28 August (fall migrant)  
Eastern Phoebe: 26 August (singing can persist into October)  
Great Crested Flycatcher: 10 August

Black-capped Chickadee: singing through end of study period  
 Tufted Titmouse: singing through end of study period  
 White-eyed Vireo: 26 August  
 Yellow-throated Vireo: 28 August  
 Warbling Vireo: singing through end of study period  
 Red-eyed Vireo: singing through end of study period  
 Brown Creeper: 19 August  
 Carolina Wren: 26 August (sings throughout the year)  
 House Wren: 12 August  
 Veery: none singing during study period  
 Wood Thrush: 12 August  
 American Robin: 26 August  
 Gray Catbird: none singing during study period  
 Brown Thrasher: none singing during study period  
 European Starling: through the end of study period  
 Blue-winged Warbler: 19 August  
 Yellow Warbler: 10 August  
 Common Yellowthroat: 26 August (singing can persist into September)  
 Hooded Warbler: 28 August  
 Scarlet Tanager: 23 August  
 Eastern Towhee: 19 August  
 Chipping Sparrow: 19 August  
 Field Sparrow: 19 August  
 Savannah Sparrow: none singing  
 Song Sparrow: singing through end of study period (sings throughout the year)  
 Swamp Sparrow: 26 August  
 Dark-eyed Junco: 23 August  
 Northern Cardinal: singing through end of study period  
 Rose-breasted Grosbeak: whisper song given once  
 Indigo Bunting: 10 August (sometimes heard through 15 - 20 August)  
 Bobolink: none heard singing during the study period  
 Red-winged Blackbird: 6 September (resumed song at end of study period - will sing through at least November)  
 Common Grackle: none heard singing during study period  
 Baltimore Oriole: 26 August  
 Purple Finch: none heard singing during study period  
 American Goldfinch: 28 August

\*Mourning dove and yellow-billed cuckoo were included in the study, although they are not passerines.

### Prebasic Molt and Song Phenology

In addition to the obvious connection between singing and breeding cycles, there seems to be a correlation between the onset of prebasic molt (the transition to "winter" plumage) and cessation of territorial song. It is believed that prebasic molt in most migratory North American birds is timed to take advantage of abundant late

summer food supplies, when demands of family duties have ended and migration is not yet underway (Terres 1980). Although the specific timing of molts for northeastern Ohio birds is still fertile ground for research, we have enough general information to say at least that a correlation between the late summer "quiet period" and prebasic molt exists.

There are some interesting exceptions and variations to this basic seasonal pattern. During my surveys, for example, eastern wood-pewees and red-eyed vireos continued to sing persistently through the end of August and even into September. Baltimore orioles, nearly silent in July, actually sang more in August. It is among these exceptions that I think we can learn the most about the reasons for the precise timing of the late summer decline in song.

In the case of eastern wood-pewees, I found that the number of individuals singing per hour on 6 September (5.6/hr) was nearly the same as that on 6 August (5.33 per/hr.) in North Chagrin Reservation. Wood-pewees are the most obvious singers in the forest from very late August through mid-September, after which singing quickly declines. Prebasic molt in this species apparently peaks in September (McCarty 1996), continuing as the birds undertake fall migration. It is interesting to note that in Ohio wood-pewees have been found with nestlings as late as September (Peterjohn 1989, McCarty 1996). Therefore, wood-pewees may be holding territory later in the season than most of our other breeding birds, and they undergo prebasic molt later than most of our breeding birds. Detailed observation might reveal whether these late nesters are putting off molt until nesting has been completed.

### Resumption of Song After Prebasic Molt

One of the most fascinating aspects of song phenology in our passerines occurs after the prebasic molt has been completed. Even though these birds are finished with nesting for the season, some will resume singing. Singing in this case may be just a hormonal response to changes in the photoperiod, but this needs further study. Usually this late season song lacks the "enthusiasm" of the spring and early summer song. This post-molt song is usually (but not always) given in short bouts and sometimes with incomplete phrasing. Warbling vireos, American robins, pine warblers, Baltimore orioles, and red-winged blackbirds are some examples of "post-molt" singers in northeastern Ohio.

The song phenology of warbling vireos can help illustrate this pattern. Warbling vireos become fairly non-vocal in mid- or late July through early August (pers. obs., Peterjohn 1989), though some sporadic singing will sometimes be heard during this time (pers. obs.). Singing often increases toward the end of August and into September before the local breeders depart for migration. Apparently, unlike red-eyed vireos, warbling vireos are known to sing in fall migration (Gardali & Ballard 2000). How does this song pattern fit into warbling vireo breeding and molt cycles? First, warbling vireos are usually single-brooded (again, this is unlike red-eyed vireo, which frequently raises two broods). Once nesting is complete in warbling vireos, usually by early July, they go through a complete molt in July and August. This corresponds to the relatively quiet period that I have noted for this species in northeastern Ohio. Therefore, it seems that once the prebasic molt is complete, warbling vireos will resume singing, and I suspect that at least some of these birds



are singing on the same territories they held earlier in the year.

Baltimore orioles follow a similar pattern of nesting, molt, and song.

Red-winged blackbirds offer another example of this "post-molt" resumption of song. Male red-winged blackbirds give frequent territorial songs when they reach their breeding sites in late winter or early spring. Song is given regularly until about 21 July (pers. obs.) Singing becomes very sporadic in late July through about the first week of September, after which songs are given more frequently (pers. obs.) Red-winged blackbirds are reported to go through a complete molt from "early July - mid

October" (Yasukawa & Searcy 1995) or June - September for after-hatch-year birds (Pyle 1997). From my observations in northeastern Ohio, the peak of prebasic molt in red-winged blackbirds occurs in August, with most adult males appearing to be in fresh basic plumage by about mid-September. Adult male red-winged blackbirds will do some singing at least into November in northeastern Ohio (pers. obs.) and possibly throughout the winter. I have even observed adult males doing a wing-spread or "song spread" display while singing in fall, contra published reports (Orians & Christman 1968 cited in Yasukawa & Searcy 1995).

Why males of some bird species, particularly migratory species, continue to sing once the nesting season has ended is, to my knowledge, still a mystery. 🐦

### Conclusions

Understanding the song phenology of birds can broaden our understanding of bird distribution, breeding, molt, and migration cycles. It has implications for anyone doing breeding bird censuses, as the timing of any song-based censusing should take into account the variations of song phenology for a given species at a given location.

I suspect that the dates of last song will be different for other regions in Ohio. I encourage birders to find their own summer songbird survey route. Visit it each week, recording the number of each species heard, along with time spent afield, so that birds

singing per hour can be compared as the seasons change. With more detailed observations, we might learn that we can not only see molt in birds, but hear it as well.

### Bibliography

- Evans Ogden, L.J. and B.J. Stutchbury. 1994. Hooded Warbler. In *The Birds of North America*, No. 110 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.
- Gardali, T. and G. Ballard. 2000. Warbling Vireo. In *The Birds of North America*, No. 551 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA and the American Ornithologists' Union, Washington D.C.
- McCarty, J. P. 1996. Eastern Wood-Pewee. In *The Birds of North America*, No. 245 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA and the American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.

Orians, G. H., and G. M. Christman. 1968. A comparative study of the behavior of Red-winged, Tricolored, and Yellow-headed Blackbirds. *Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool.* 84: 1 - 81.

Peterjohn, B. G. 1989. *The Birds of Ohio*. Indiana Univ. Press, Bloomington, IN.

Popp, J. W., R. W. Ficken, and J. A. Reinartz. 1985. Short-term temporal avoidance of interspecific acoustic interference among forest birds. *Auk* 102: 744 - 748.

Pyle, P. 1997. *Identification guide to North American birds*. Part 1: Columbidae to Ploceidae. Slate Creek Press, Bolinas, CA.

Rising, J.D., and N. J. Flood 1998. Baltimore Oriole. In *The Birds of North America*, No. 384 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA and the American Ornithologists' Union, Washington D.C.

Roth, R.R., M. S. Johnson, and T.J. Underwood. 1996 Wood Thrush. In *The Birds of North America*, No. 246 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA and the American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.

Terres, J. K. 1980. *The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

Watson, L. M. 1994. Effects of nesting stage, time of season, and time of day on Wood Thrush detectability. B.Sc. thesis, Univ. of Delaware, Newark.

Yasukawa, K., and W.A. Searcy. 1995. Red-winged Blackbird. In *The Birds of North America*, No. 184 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA and the American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.

# Short Note: My Summer Guests

**John D. Kraus**

1854 Home Road, Delaware, OH 43015

w8jk@midohio.net

Since 1969, barn swallows *Hirundo rustica* have nested annually in my garage. I adore these beautiful, graceful birds, masters of the zig, the zag, the swoop and U-turn, snatching insects, their "fast food," as they speed through the air. Each April I welcome them and each September am sorry to see them leave. They fly to South America, arriving there in October, then leaving in March to return. One swallow I called "Early Bird" always arrived earlier than the rest, sometimes by many days.

"Early Bird"  
in full flight . . .



and gliding in through the  
open-from-the-top window.

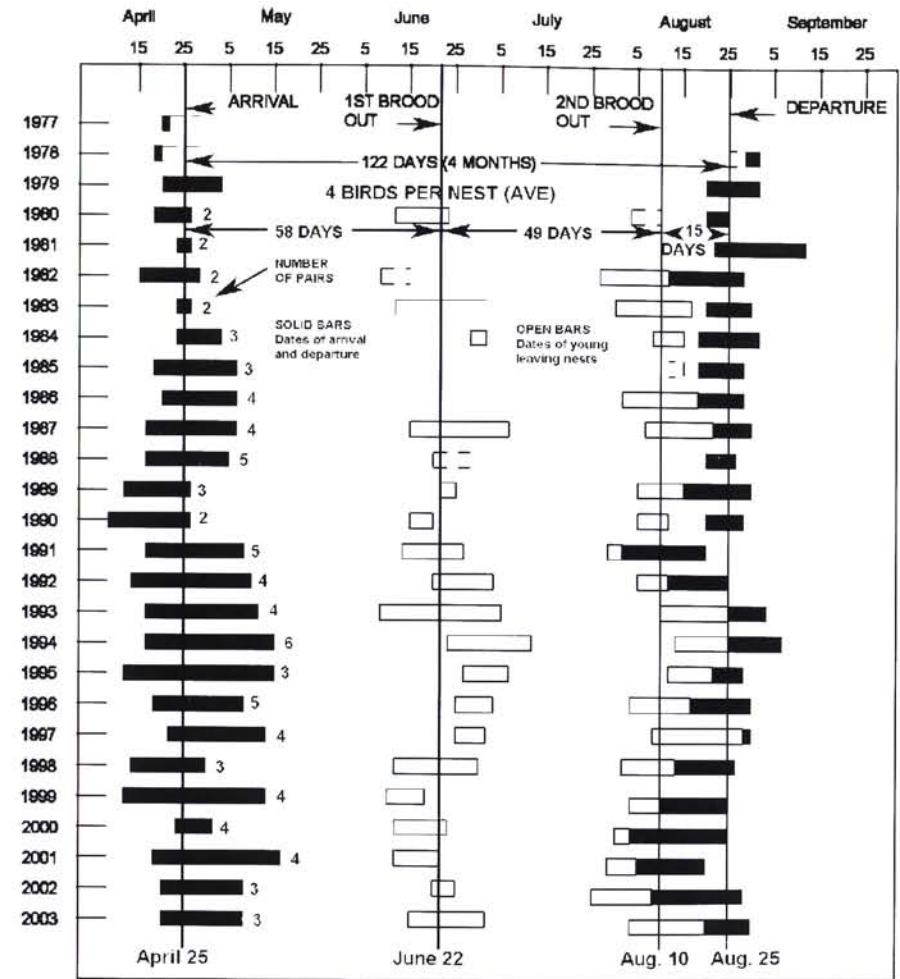


What unseen force drew "Early Bird" across continents and oceans to that open-from-the-top garage window, through which she flew fast-as-a-bullet year after year?

One April I forgot to have the garage window open. I was sitting outside on the deck when I saw a swallow circling overhead. It came by very close to me emitting a piercing shriek, saying in effect, "Look, we're back. Open the window!" I did and the swallow zoomed right in.

In 1977 I began keeping accurate records of the arrivals, nest activity, and departures as summarized in the chart on the next page.

## SHORT NOTES: BARN SWALLOWS



**DATES FOR BARN SWALLOWS**  
At 1854 Home Road, Delaware, Ohio  
40 deg. 11.766 min. N. Lat., 83 deg. 3.953 min. W. Long.

## Short Notes: Monumental Merlins North and South

### Merlins in a Northern Ohio Cemetery

**Lou Gardella**

12828 McCracken Road, Garfield Heights, OH 44125  
Lgard63356@aol.com

Once again this winter I kept watch on up to five merlins at Calvary Cemetery in Cleveland. The first (merlin 1) was observed on 22 October 2003. This male was found perched on the top branches of the same oak tree last year's female used for her pre-roost tree, in the Cemetery's Section 85. He roosted a few nights on the east side of the cemetery. Could it be last year's bird? One evening I drove in to find



Merlin 4, present at Calvary Cemetery in Cleveland 10 Jan-28 Feb 2004. Photograph by Lou Gardella.

GARDELLA / BRUMBAUGH

On 29 October, I briefly observed a brown merlin. After relocating it preening in the Section 85 preroost tree, I determined that this was the female from last year (merlin 2). She used this tree nearly every day throughout the winter. Because of my work schedule, I was unable to observe the merlins in the evenings except on the weekends. Merlin 2 and merlin 4 (see below) were observed during the day.

On 10 January 2004, another merlin (merlin 3) was observed. Smaller than the female, it was grayish in color. I determined this bird was an immature male. It was observed for only two days. 25 January brought a new merlin (merlin 4), an immature/female. It showed had two distinctive light spots on the secondaries, and was present through 28 February.

On 23 February, I observed another merlin in Section 64. This bird (merlin 5) was an adult male. It was present until 8 March 2004.

On 23 March 2004, merlin 1 was in his pre-roost tree. Merlin 2 was in Section 74; I stopped to observe her, and she flew to roost. I went back to merlin 1 and watched him go to his roost tree at 6:52 p.m.

This was the last night I saw them. The 24<sup>th</sup> was dark, dreary, and rainy. I was not able to get into the cemetery this evening: security had closed the gates early. On 25 March, I found that a male American Kestrel had replaced the merlin. 🦅



Merlin 4, at Calvary Cemetery in Cleveland. Note the upperparts markings that distinguished it from Merlin 2. Photo by Lou Gardella 27 February 2004.

### Merlins in a Southern Ohio Cemetery

**Lori Brumbaugh**

3905 Vine Street, Cincinnati, OH 45317  
rthawk55@aol.com

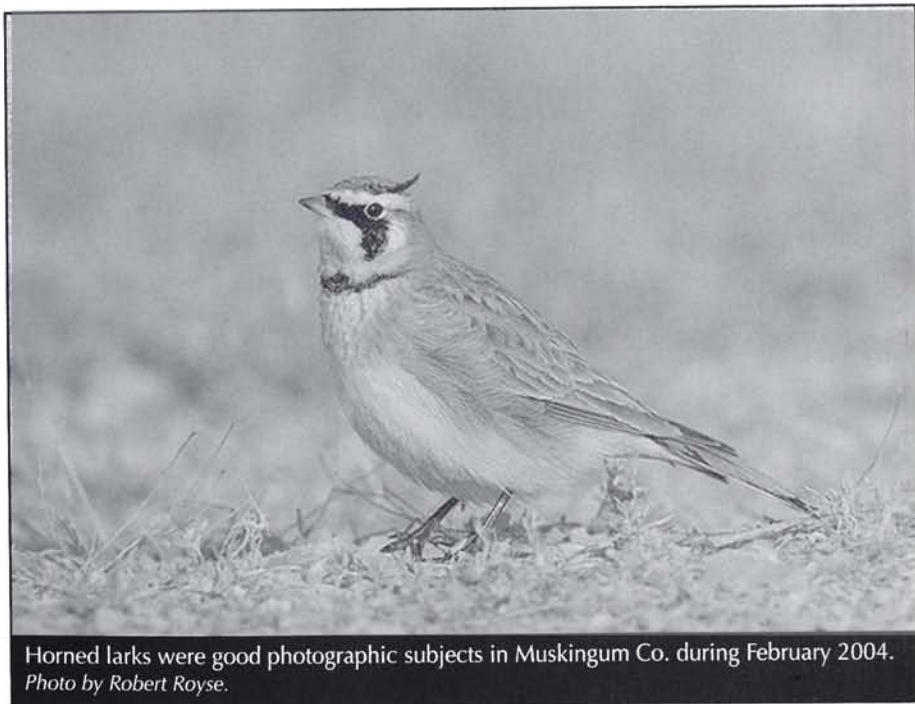
The wintering merlins of Spring Grove Cemetery in Cincinnati returned, perking up the cold, bleak days of this winter. After an exciting merlin-filled 2001-02 winter, the cold days of 2002-03 produced only a one-day sighting of one falcon.

The first of this winter, a male, was reported on 6 December 2003 at the Cemetery. A brown bird (a female or immature male) showed up on 24 December, perching in the general vicinity of the male. Four days later, a second brown bird was observed in another part of the cemetery. For those who studied the bird regularly, this was obviously a different bird, with lighter streaking on the breast. As in previous years, the most reliable time to view these birds was between 5 and 6 pm,

when the merlins were perched at the top of trees near their roost area. Their choice of roost trees was conifers, but did not always involve the same tree. If you took your eye off them for a second or two, it was easy to miss them zooming into their roost. All the merlins I observed roosted low in the trees. I watched one spring off its perch, flying low to the ground and inches from a person standing near its roost in a conifer. The entire show lasted seconds, and the person never knew the bird had flown into the tree right beside him.

A second male was observed on 18 January, bringing the total to four merlins for the winter at the Spring Grove. This male was bluer with black wings, black head, and minimal peachy coloring on the belly and legs. I watched this bird go to roost a foot or so off the road in plain view, low near the trunk of a sweetgum.

We don't know exactly when the merlins departed for the north. The last reported sighting for a brown bird was on 11 February 2004. My last view of the cemetery merlins was on 18 February, in an area where they normally were not seen. It was only a fleeting glimpse of a merlin streaking out of a heavily wooded area. The merlins' winter was over at Spring Grove. 🐦



Horned larks were good photographic subjects in Muskingum Co. during February 2004.  
Photo by Robert Royse.

## Annals of Pelagic Birding in Ohio: Thick-billed Murre

Bill Whan

223 E. Tulane Rd., Columbus, OH 43202

danielel@iwaynet.net

*In the winter of '96-7 a driving storm from the Labrador coast caught up a considerable number of these multitudinous sea-fowl and swept them far inland. When the storm had spent its fury the Murres were found promiscuously stranded in the lakes and water-ways, or wandering about dazed and helpless in the fields of Ohio, Indiana, and neighboring states. Many specimens were taken by the hand and others shot at scattered localities; and the village oracles were sorely put to it to tell what this strange fowl might be. The first published record for Ohio was of the one taken by Rev. J.M. Keck, of Mentor, on December 19<sup>th</sup>, 1896. A score of others have since come to light, all taken at about the same time or a few days later. This memorable inundation by Brünnich Murres was general throughout the Eastern States and records were made as far south as South Carolina.*

---William L. Dawson, *The Birds of Ohio* (1903)

The thick-billed murre (*Uria lomvia*) is a circumpolar Arctic breeder. Its southernmost colony in eastern North America is a small remnant one in the



A thick-billed murre mount from the OSU Museum, #14007. Collected 20 mi from Sandusky, 19 Dec. 1896. (E.C. Mosely)

Gulf of St. Lawrence, but after centuries of depredations by humans most murres nest, often in staggering numbers, on remote cliffs far to the north. These populations winter at sea in the icy western Atlantic, with a few regularly seen as far south as Long Island.

This sleek, foot-and-a-half long black and white alcid is a salt-water bird, its diet mostly small fish. It is well suited to cold temperatures and the violent storms of northern latitudes. Its winter range and habitats in eastern North America fairly closely resemble those of the dovekie *Alle alle*, which has never been confirmed in Ohio, yet the thick-billed murre has dozens of records for the state. How this came to be is a curious tale.

Beginning in 1890, numerous reports emerged of unprecedented

<sup>1</sup> Probably 18 December---see Jones 1902b.

numbers of thick-billed murre in locations where they had never been common or even recorded (see Fleming 1907). Averill (1891), stating he knew of no Connecticut records of the species, reported large numbers of Brünnich's murre (the standard name in the US for *Uria lomvia* in those days) in the state during the winter of 1890-91, with many reports of tame, weak, and starving birds in odd places, and hundreds shot and thousands seen offshore.

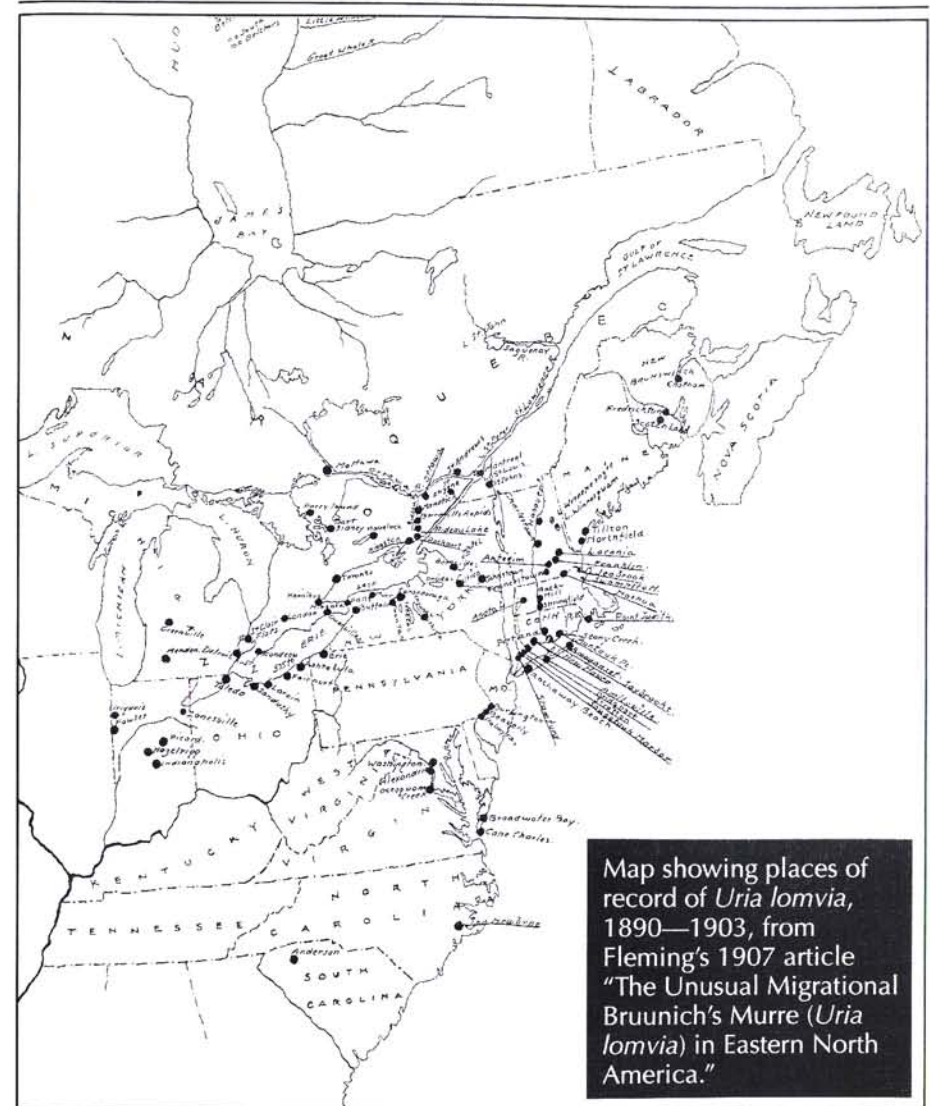
For the Great Lakes, there seem to be only two reliable records of this species before 1894: in Quebec and in Lake Ontario (Gaston 1988). No Ohio record was established until 1896. The open waters of Lake Erie must have been the last frontier for Ohio bird observers in the late nineteenth century. The careful Wheaton (1882) accepts only seven Ohio gull species (judging four of them rare to accidental), and no alcids. Today we recognize nineteen gull and five alcid species. Knowledgeable observers were few in those days, and it was only the large wrecks of murre in the Lake Erie area from the 1890s on—numerous enough that they came to the attention of taxidermists, hunters, and even farmers—led to the specimens that allowed Ohio ornithologists to document their occurrence. Nearly all specimens examined of the wrecked murre were hatch-year birds, and most showed signs of starvation. There are no records of birds returning east from the Great Lakes, so theirs was a one-way journey.

In 1894, Dionne described “numerous flocks” of murre flying past Quebec, adding that “hundreds have been shot by sportsmen and some have even been killed with sticks near the wharves.” This local “novelty” continued from mid-November through early January, with reports of birds in the mountains ten miles from the St. Lawrence River. Barrows (1895) recounted the discovery the same year of a dying murre in a small stream in Montcalm County, Michigan, far from large bodies of water, and pronounced it the state’s first record, saying its confirmation rendered “more probable the several more or less reliable reports of capture of other members of the family within the State.”

It was not until 1896 that their sheer numbers brought them to the attention of those who kept Ohio bird records. The first records date from 18 December of that year, with two birds shot near Painesville in Lake County (Jones 1902b). The following day, more birds were shot in the western basin of the lake. Over the next week a number of records accumulated. Oliver Davie (1900) reported that

*We can now, for the first time, add this bird to the avifauna of Ohio. A mounted specimen before me, was captured alive by Mr. R. T. Stewart in a field near Fair Haven, Preble county, Ohio, December 19<sup>th</sup>, 1896<sup>2</sup>. The bird was kindly identified for me by Mr. Charles W. Richmond, Assistant Curator of Birds in the National Museum. He states that a wave of these birds was scattered, by a storm which occurred about the above date and Prof. E. L. Moseley reports two specimens being shot at Put-in-Bay and two at Sandusky on December 19<sup>th</sup>.*

<sup>2</sup> The tag on an unmounted skin at OSU reads “Ohio, Preble Co., Israel Twp. Fairhaven Dec 20 1896. Robert T. Stewart. *Uria lomvia lomvia*. Mounted by W.A. Scott from University Catalog Entry 1288.”



A remarkable number of reports emerged over the next week to ten days, most of birds shot by curious gunners who then brought them to others' attention. Some reached the hands of ornithologists, some those of taxidermists, and more had to remain as credible anecdotes. Untold numbers probably went unnoticed or at least unpublished. If a bird could end up in a Preble County snowdrift, how many more must have gone undiscovered across the state? Very few people could identify even a corpse of this unfamiliar species, but some at least recognized them as something unusual. At least 12 thick-billed murre were reported and published for 1896 for Ohio, but it would not be surprising to learn that a hundred times that number actually passed through the state. Here are the 1896 details:

❖ 18 December 1896: two specimens taken near Painesville, Lake Co (Jones 1902b), one now at the OSU Museum; Williams (1950) reports they were “picked up by J. M. Keck of Mentor (in his yard, according to F. N. Shankland).”<sup>3</sup>

❖ 19 December 1896: one specimen Preble Co., probably now at OSU Museum (Davie 1900); tag data indicate the date of collection as 20 December 1896, and the specimen is unmounted, though it may have later been relaxed

❖ 19 December 1896: three immature birds taken in Sandusky Bay (Jones 1902b, 1909), with one mount at OSU Museum

❖ 25 December 1896: four taken just west of Lorain, Lorain Co., from group of six (Jones 1899, 1902a, 1909)

❖ “during the last half of December” 1896: Jones (1909) mentions “others reported from Ottawa Co.,” without further details.

There are December 1896 records in nearby states with less direct connections via water to the Atlantic, such as Indiana (six), Michigan (two), and even landlocked Iowa. That five of the aforementioned records, even the remote Iowa one, predated Ohio’s first occurrence suggests how many may have simply gone unnoticed here. A recently identified specimen from Milwaukee, the sole record for Wisconsin and for Lake Michigan, can be dated only to prior to 1900, but probably was among the great wreck of ‘96 (Idzikowski 2002).

The period from 1893 through 1909 featured numerous irruptions of thick-billed murre into the Great Lakes (Gaston 1988). Not all of them reached as far west as Lake Erie, however, and the next murre here were noted in 1907:

❖ 1 December 1907: one seen in Sandusky (Moseley 1908)

❖ 3 December 1907: four taken of a group of six, presumably in or near Sandusky (Moseley 1908)

❖ 3 or 4 December 1907: two specimens, perhaps those remaining alive after the previous record, presumably Sandusky area (Moseley 1908)

❖ “a few days” before 22 December 1907: one taken in Jefferson, Ashtabula Co., ten miles inland (Sim 1908)

❖ “late December” 1907: a wing of this species found at Cedar Point, Erie Co., by Jones (ed. note to Sim 1908).

The following year brought one report:

❖ December 1908: Jones (1909) writes “Professor E. L. Moseley tells me that there were either five or seven in Sandusky Bay in December, 1908.” It seems likely this is an error, and refers instead to the 1–4 December 1907 birds described above.

Only a single published report—this one involving a bird allowed to live—arose after those of 1907, this time from 1920:

❖ 12 December 1920: Doolittle (1924) of Painesville described a bird swimming off a Lake Erie breakwall, just where the author asserts another had been shot in 1896.

<sup>3</sup> The record is unclear here. Doolittle (1924) writes he saw this species from a breakwall in Lake Erie in 1920, saying “one was shot at this very spot in 1896.” If Williams is correct, this 1896 murre must be another beyond the two he cites (1950). Williams, without citing evidence, locates this breakwall in Fairport; Doolittle, of Painesville, writes (1924) only that it was “extending far out into Lake Erie.”

Another major regional pulse of thick-billed murre occurred in 1950. Many were reported from Ontario, and a couple of records came from SE Michigan at this time. Ohio’s record of the species in 1950 is less than fully satisfactory, and derives from Milton B. Trautman’s draft of an unfinished work on the birds of western Lake Erie. Here he has this to say:

*One of the worst blizzards in Ohio during my lifetime began Thanksgiving Day, 23 November 1950. On 24 November the temperature remained around 10°F, on 25 November the temperature rose no higher than 12°F, and the blizzard conditions prevailed until sometime after 3:00 p.m. on South Bass Island. There was a foot of drifted snow on the island, 19 inches of snow in Cleveland, 11 inches in Columbus and 29 inches in Pittsburgh! Some snow fell daily from 26 November to 9 December and for seven days the temperature did not rise about 32°F. Hearing rumors of an invasion of murre I walked, sometimes hip-deep through snow, for three miles along the south shore of South Bass Island. Opposite Starve Island I saw a bird which was swimming close to shore, and I assumed was a Thick-billed Murre. Later Frank Ligas described a murre which he saw that was similar to the one I saw and may have been the same bird.*

Incomplete as it is, this 54-year old report constitutes the most recent for this species in Ohio. In fact, since 1950 only a few reports have come from the entire Great Lakes region, one in New York in 1983, and birds in Ontario in 1995 and 1998. Field identification techniques for alcids have advanced considerably, and we no longer have to rely solely upon dead birds to confirm their presence. Numbers of alert observers have increased substantially. In fact, three new alcid species—Atlantic puffin, black guillemot, and long-billed murrelet—have been added to the Ohio list during the last 25 years. Yet for a period more than twice that long, we are without a single report of our most oft-recorded alcid, the thick-billed murre. It seems something must have changed in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, and then again changed—perhaps reverting to a former state—in the mid twentieth century.

Many authorities who have studied the seesawing fortunes of thick-billed murre in the Great Lakes, such as their westward journeys as many as 225 miles from Lake Erie into the interior of Indiana, and fully 550 miles west of Toledo into Iowa (both during the major wreck of ‘96), have advanced theories to explain the phenomenon. Fleming was the first, in his “The unusual migration of Brünnich’s Murre (*Uria lomvia*) in eastern North America” (1907) where he reviews published records of thick-billed murre during the previous seventeen years, and concludes that wintering birds in Hudson Bay were sometimes cut off from their food source by ice and then migrated overland to the south.

Other students of these phenomena have presented theories of their own, many having to do with violent storms as the cause of these displacements. Gaston (1988), co-author of the *Birds of North America* account of *Uria lomvia*, summarizes these arguments in the light of his research, and finds all of them wanting. He observes

that there is obvious clumping of wrecks of murre in the Great Lakes, and that it is statistically highly significant. He cites contemporaneous accounts of the birds' movements as proof that their course was westward rather than southward, heading inland from the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Study of the morphology of specimens from the wrecks established most birds as members of populations from further north than Hudson Bay. Though major storms at times may have played a role in speeding the murre's progress, Gaston found no clear correlation of wrecks with severe weather events or with overall climatic trends. These birds winter in areas where violent nor'easters are frequent, and while individual birds can occasionally be displaced by storms, it seems unlikely that thousands would so often be blown hundreds of miles inland.

Gaston brings up several other coincidences to suggest that a biological cause for the phenomenon is more likely than a physical one. The vast majority of specimens from the wrecks are first-year birds. There is a strong correlation among the wrecks as to time of year, with most records occurring November through mid December. There is no evidence that anything but death was the fate of the wrecked birds, ruling out repeated irruptions for any segment of the population. The spikes in numbers of wrecked birds, lasting from one to ten years, also suggest a cause other than weather or climate. Finally, there seem to be no clear correlations with irruptions by related species wintering in the same seas.

We are left with a picture in which young inexperienced birds irregularly fly in great numbers west up the Gulf of St. Lawrence and into the Great Lakes or even beyond them. These flights sometimes accompany flights south along the Atlantic coast far beyond the normal wintering range. The wrecks tend to occur for several years at a time, and at predictable times of the year. They seem unrelated to storms, or to flights of other seabirds. Gaston postulates that the cause may have been failures in murre's food sources, such as capelin *Mallotus villosus*, a fish species known to vary widely from year to year in numbers. These prey fluctuations have of course continued in the 50-plus years since the last major murre wrecks, but the pressure on winter food supplies has abated with population declines in thick-billed murre numbers in western Greenland and perhaps in the High Arctic colonies as well. If this theory is sound, only a strong rebound in numbers of breeding thick-billed murre is likely to bring them back (admittedly only to die in the attempt to find food) to Ohio. Most likely, however, the thick-billed murre of Ohio will become another historical curiosity, like rolling clouds of passenger pigeons, or night-long choruses of upland sandpipers overhead, or the hordes of prairie-chickens that used to stroll the streets of old Toledo.

#### Acknowledgements

The author is grateful for help received during the preparation of this article from Rob Harlan and John Idzikowski.

#### Literature Consulted

- Averill, C.K. 1891. Brännich's Murre in Connecticut. *Auk* 16:307-308.
- Barrows, W.B. 1895. Brännich's Murre in Michigan. *Auk* 12:387.
- Campbell, L. 1968. *Birds of the Toledo Region*. Toledo Blade Co., Toledo.
- Davie, O. 1900. *Nests and Eggs of North American Birds*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, David McKay, Philadelphia. p. 20
- Dawson, W.L. 1903. *The Birds of Ohio*. Wheaton Publishing Co., Columbus. pp. 639-640.
- Dionne, C.E. 1894. An Abundance of Murre in the Environs of Quebec. *Auk* 11: 175.
- Doolittle, E.A. 1924. Record of Brännich's Murre for Lake Co, Ohio. *Auk* 41:148.
- Fleming, J. 1906. *Uria lomvia*. Brännich's Murre. *Auk* 23:441.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1907. The unusual migration of Brännich's Murre (*Uria lomvia*) in eastern North America. *Proceedings of the Fourth International Ornithological Congress*, pp. 528-543
- Gaston, A.J. 1982. Migration of Juvenile Thick-billed Murre through Hudson Strait in 1980. *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 96(1):30-34.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1988. The Mystery of the Murre: Thick-billed Murre, *Uria lomvia*, in the Great Lakes Region, 1890-1986. *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 102(4):705-711.
- \_\_\_\_\_, and J.M. Hipfner. Thick-billed Murre (*Uria lomvia*) In *The Birds of North America*, No. 497. (A. Poole and F. Gills, eds.) The Birds of North America, Inc. Philadelphia, PA.
- Idzikowski, J. 2002. A possible nineteenth-century murre from Milwaukee. *Passenger Pigeon* 64(3):151-161.
- Jones, L. 1899. Brännich's Murre, *Uria lomvia* in Lorain County, Ohio. *Wilson Bulletin* 11(1):2.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1902a. Bird Studies in Lorain County, Ohio. *Wilson Bulletin* 9(2):51.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1902b. Brännich's Murre, *Uria lomvia*, on Lake Erie. *Wilson Bulletin* 9(1): 16.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1903. The Birds of Ohio. *Oh. St. Acad. Sci. Spec. Paper* No. 6, Columbus. p. 213.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1908. editorial note to Sim (1908). *Wilson Bulletin* 20(1):54.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1909. The Birds of Cedar Point and Vicinity. *Wilson Bulletin* 21(2):68.
- Moseley E.L. 1896. *Ohio Academy of Science 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Report*. p. 50.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1908. Brännich's Murre on Lake Erie, 1907. *Wilson Bulletin* 20(2):104.
- Peterjohn, B.G. 2001. *The Birds of Ohio*. The Wooster Book Co, Wooster, OH. p. 252.

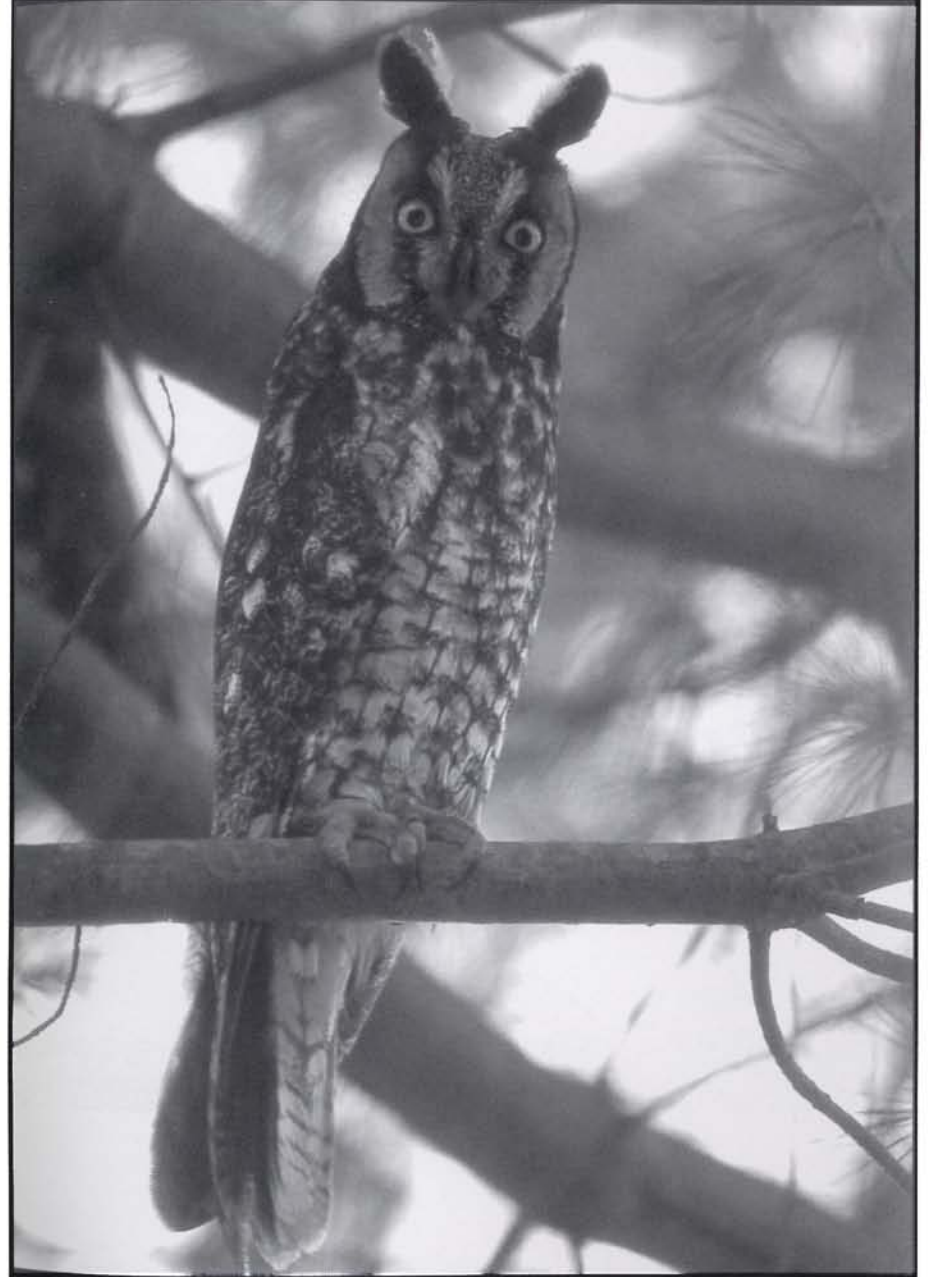
THICK-BILLED MURRE

- Sim, R.J. 1908. Another Brunnich's Murre record for Ohio. *Wilson Bulletin* 20(1):54.
- Trautman, M.B. n.d. *Birds of Western Lake Erie: Documented Observations and Notes*. (R.L. Stuckey, ed., in preparation). Account no. 163.
- Wheaton, J.M. 1882. Report on the Birds of Ohio. *Ohio Geological Survey Bulletin*. 4:187-628
- White, G.R. 1898. Brunnich's Murre (*Uria lomvia*) at Ottawa, Canada. *Auk* 15:183.
- Williams. 1950. *Birds of the Cleveland Region*. Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Cleveland. p. 73.



January 2004 provided opportunity for a gorgeous portrait of this American tree sparrow in Licking County. Photo by Robert Royse.

## A Parting Shot . . .



The long-eared owls of Killdeer Plains WA in Wtandot Co. seem accustomed to human attention. This male faced down photographer Gary Meszaros on 14 February 2004.