



GREATER AKRON

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Witt's End

Searching for the Perfect Field Guide

I recently discovered that between my partner Susan and I, we have 16 Peterson's Field Guides just for Eastern and Western birds. Two prizes of this collection are copies, one each, Eastern and Western, signed by author Roger Tory Peterson. The oldest is an Eastern guide Susan found, dated 1939. It's probably a second edition since the original printing was in 1934.

For me, the most prized is an old Western guide my first puppy used as a chewy toy one snowy afternoon nearly 30 years ago in Colorado. A few years ago when I asked Peterson to sign this guide, he looked at it quite seriously and said, "Young man, I think it's time you invested in a new book!" We both had a good laugh about how the book got to its current state of ruination.

Peterson was an incredible individual. He had a way of making you feel that it was just you and he having a conversation, not surrounded by all the other autograph hounds. He then said to me, "There's just something about these books that we can't let go."

I cannot even venture a guess at how many books I have let go. But I think it safe to say I still have every field guide I've ever purchased or was given to me. I haunt bookstores searching for old ones and usually pony up the cash for new ones with every change in bird taxonomy. To paraphrase Erasmus, "When I get little money I buy field guides; and if any is left I buy food and clothes."

Once again it's time in the birding year to get out the field guides and brush up on warbler identification, determine the configuration of spots on different thrush species, and learn the range limits of those look-alike sparrows.

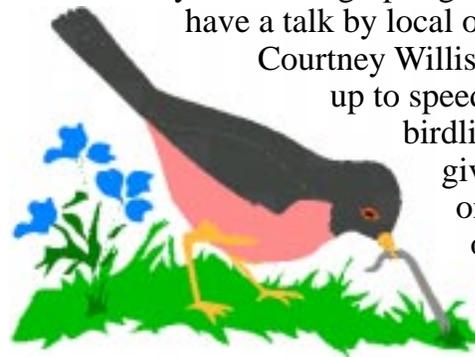
Other help is out there, too, in the form of field trips. If you've not attended a field trip don't be intimidated by your perceived lack of knowledge. The great thing about birding with others is that you can discuss, yes, even argue, about a bird's identity. But that's healthy — as long as it doesn't get too loud. It helps you learn the bird's physiognomy.

Field trips start at 8 a.m., April 29th at Indigo Lake (near the Special Events area) in the CVNRA. I'll be looking for you — probably with a new field guide in hand.

— Clyde Witt

Meetings Ahead

For the next couple of months we'll definitely be thinking Spring. **April 25** we'll have a talk by local ornithologist Courtney Willis. She will get us up to speed on local



birdlife and maybe give us some clues on finding some of those challenging sparrow species.

In May we'll be talking and thinking gardens with a visit from Judy Semroc of Operation Botanic Rescue. Come to the meeting and learn how to save some precious plants.

The meeting for **June** is still in the planning stage. We do know that it will be the picnic meeting format that has been so successful the past two years. We also intend to have some furry or feathered creatures as we have in the past. But June is a ways off.

Except for June and December, all our meetings are held at the Seiberling Naturealm on the

fourth Tuesday of the month. Doors open at 7 p.m. and the meeting begins promptly at 7:30 p.m. Meetings are free and open to the public. Please bring your own coffee mug to help us cut down on litter — to say nothing of having to do the dishes!

It's Election Time!

Election for chapter leadership offices will be held at the June meeting. Currently all offices are open. The nomination committee, headed by Allan Dooley, is accepting names of candidates for the offices of president, vice president, secretary and treasurer. We are also looking for people interested in chairing the hospitality, conservation, field trip and program committees.

Don't be shy. You can nominate yourself for a job. If you nominate someone else, please ask them first! We will need the list of nominees soon. See either Allan or Clyde for details. Most of the current elected members of the executive committee have been serving the chapter, in various capacities, for about 10 years. It's time to get some new perspective on environmental issues, programs and field trips.

Field Trips

We're heading to a few new spots this Spring season, along with some of your old favorites. It's your choice: See the same birds in a new spot or new birds in an old spot. And remember, rain delays are for baseball, not birding. Trips last most of the morning, breaking up by lunch time.

April 29 at 8 a.m. in the parking lot at Indigo Lake in the CVNRA begins the season. This spot is located on Riverview Road, just north of the Special Events field, across from the beaver pond. We'll walk the tracks and trails, looking for some early spring arrivals. The hike will be moderately challenging, about four miles in length. Leader will be Clyde Witt

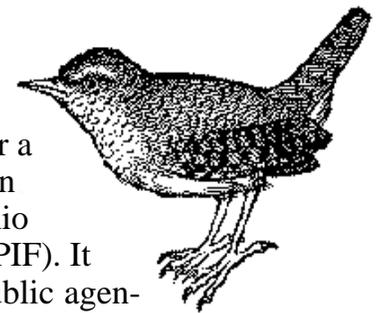
May 6 at 8 a.m. Judy Tisdale will lead a walk through Hinckley Reservation. This park has lots more than its infamous returning turkey vultures! Meet in the Boathouse parking lot near the Johnson Picnic area.

May 13 we return to that all-time favorite, Firestone Park. Allan Dooley will lead a walk beginning at 8 a.m. through one Akron's hottest warbler spots at the peak of warbler migration. This should be a good one. Meet in the parking lot off Harrington Road, just north of Warner Road. This is International Migratory Bird Day so come out and be part of an international event!

May 21 will be a new location for us, Silver Creek Park in the southeast region of the county out near Barberton. This is another park that deserves a closer look. Michele Tucker will get things going about 9 a.m. from the parking lot nearest the Hametown Road entrance.

Bird Species at Risk

A special focus on birds and their habitats in Ohio has been the emphasis for a number of years by an association called Ohio Partners in Flight (OPIF). It is a consortium of public agencies, non-governmental organizations, universities and environmental centers united in a volunteer effort to conserve bird populations.



OPIF ranks birds at risk and why they are at risk. Here is a partial list. About one-fifth of at-risk birds are forest species. At the top of the list is the olive-sided flycatcher. This bird prefers small openings with dead trees in mature forests. Its declining populations are probably due to loss of suitable migration habitat.

Another forest bird of concern is the red-headed woodpecker. It prefers small open woodlots in open farmland landscapes. Since Ohio has lost nearly 90 percent of its wetlands, the fact that wetland species are in decline comes as no surprise. Birds like the piping plover, black tern and king rail need undisturbed vegetation along with open sand or gravel for nesting.

Grassland birds make up about one-third of the birds on the at-risk list. Birds like the diminutive sedge wren that prefers edges of wetlands

and wet meadows with dense vegetation are in serious trouble. The dickcissel — that meadow-lark-look alike — is hard put to find grasslands, prairies or hayfields these days. We're still fortunate to find bobolinks on occasion, but they, too, are in need of habitat protection.

Shrubland birds include those jewels of the forest, warblers. But it's the loggerhead shrike that is at the top of the list in this category. Its grasslands with hedgerows and lookout posts and perches are rapidly disappearing. Golden-winged warblers and Bewick's wrens, both prefer shrubby, brushy habitats are in trouble as well. The list of birds at risk in Ohio is long — too long. If you would like to learn more about OPIF and the good work it is doing, contact Julie Shieldcastle at the Blackswamp Bird Observatory, P.O. Box 228, Oak Harbor, OH 43449.

Magee Marsh Opens New Trail

On your next visit to Magee Marsh State Wildlife Area you'll be able to explore a new trail that opens some new vistas at this popular birding spot. The addition will add more than a half mile to the existing Walking Trail, located behind the Sportsmen's Migratory Bird Center. Access to the trail will be near the observation tower and the northeast corner of the Marsh Walking Trail. The new trail leads down a dike top, offering great views of the west marsh. It crosses a channel, winds around two ponds and

continues through a small woodlot. This trail should bring great birding opportunities given the variety of habitats it passes through. It is scheduled to open April 15.

Clearcutting In Ohio?

If you think clearcutting of forests is a problem only in the west, think again. Commercial clearcutting is increasing on Ohio's state forests, including the Hocking, Zaleski, Tar Hollow and Shawnee State Forests. Forestry officials claim that timbering is necessary for natural regeneration. They fail to see that the state forests are better suited for recreation and biodiversity protection than for commercial logging.

A series of 10 or more clearcuts are planned for the Zaleski State Forest in what the Forestry Division calls an old growth area. The cuts are allegedly for ruffed grouse management, despite the species' current abundance in that area. On the Hocking, the division has planned two clearcuts of native Virginia pines and black cherry totaling 34 acres. The Buckeye Trail runs through one of the proposed clearcuts.

These sales of state forest land to private timber companies is a clearcut example of the state selling the public's resources. Let your feelings be known to Ron Abraham, chief, Division of Forestry, 1855 Fountain Square Ct., Columbus, Ohio 43224. And send a letter to your local representative asking that this sale of public resources for private profit be stopped.

A Part of Nature, A Part of Ourselves

To see a part of nature
is to see a part of ourselves

To understand a part of nature
is to understand a part of ourselves

To love a part of nature
is to love a part of ourselves

To share a part of nature
is to share a part of ourselves

To help a part of nature
is to help a part of ourselves

-Author Unknown



Don't forget ... if you would like to read the Greater Akron Audubon Society newsletter when you are away from your mailbox the internet address is: <http://www.cppnet.com/gaas>
