



GREATER AKRON

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Witt's End

The Low Cost of Birding

If your car chooses to die, where better than a place that has you surrounded – yes, surrounded – by bald eagles?



That's what happened to Susan and I a few days after Christmas. We were birding the Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area, West Alton, Missouri. This incredible 1,200-acre wetlands is a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers experimental project, located in the heart of the Mississippi flyway.

Although we environmentalists are frequently at odds with the Corps, this project, as the name implies, does demonstrate how to do things properly.

At the Corps' interpretive center we scanned the ground beneath the bird feeders. An American kestrel also scanned the area, making the whole scene challenging for birds and birders alike. There were great birds we usually get only fleeting glances of. More horned larks and Lapland longspurs than we could count. Rumored snow buntings remained a rumor. A colony of Eurasian tree sparrows has moved upstream from nearby St. Louis and in my excitement I nearly banged my head against the center's window glass as I suddenly realized what I was looking at.

But we were there for the eagles. This particular location attracts eagles by the hundreds! The marvelous birds filled the trees. They were all over the ice-clogged river and could be seen soaring everywhere we looked.

We lost count of northern harriers, American kestrels and other raptors. The bird that puzzled us most, until we consulted the field guide, was a rough-legged hawk perched with its back to us. Something as simple as a different angle of view can turn a routine sighting into a routine challenge. And when you get home, another birding war story.

As I said, we were there for the eagles. We could not get enough. After several hours of viewing and miles of driving to see the birds at every conceivable angle, we decided to have one more look and then off to do the holiday thing with relatives in St. Louis. We drove out to the most isolated part of the Rivers Project (as the folks there call it) and parked to get one last look at the huge birds. We made one futile attempt to count the birds all around us and came up with an arbitrary number of 160!

Then I turned the key in the ignition and – nothing. Of course we had that sick feeling in the pits of our stomachs. Then we looked up at the eagles, looked at each other and said, “Hmmm. The car won't start. It's getting dark. The temperature is about 15 degrees. We're precisely in the middle of no place. Wow! Look at all those eagles!”

The end of the story, if you cost the whole thing out, is that the last batch of eagles cost us about a dollar apiece. Well worth it.

– Clyde Witt

Birding Near and Far

Our exciting meeting program continues. Last month, naturalist Wendy Weirich of the Cleveland Metro Park System took us to the warmth of Panama. What marvelous birds and plant life. The tiny country has a bird list longer than all the birds

we can count in North America.

In February we head off in the opposite direction. **February 27** will take us to a place even colder than Akron in, well, in February. Our own Mark and Claire Purdy went to Iceland, the country created by fire, this past spring and they're willing to tell all. If you saw their great presentation on Morocco last year, you know you're in store for a real cool treat. I'm told, no funny hats this year. But plenty of great birds and adventure travel at its best.

On **March 27th** will again bring a familiar face to the front of the room. Dr. Courtenay Willis, recipient of the Greater Akron Audubon grant, will discuss her on-going avian research. If you saw her program last year — how 'bout that video right *inside* the Acadian flycatcher's nest! — you know you're in for a treat. Courtenay hopes to have one of her interns, a beneficiary of the chapter's grant, with her to help explain the program.

Our programs are held at the Seiberling Naturealm on Smith Road. Our meetings, except for December, are held the fourth Tuesday of the month. Doors open at 7 PM and the meeting starts promptly at 7:30 PM. Meetings are free. We serve light refreshments but ask that you bring your own cup. Oliger Check

Speak Your Mind, Please

Michele Tucker is creating a list of chapter members willing to write an occasional letter to U.S. representatives and senators when she notifies them of important Audubon Action Bulletins requiring member support. If you're interested in protecting the environment for birds, other wildlife and future generations, please forward your e-mail address to mitucker@aol.com.

Thanks to lots of Folks

The National Geographic Field Guides, purchased with gifts donated in memory of former chapter member Lee Warner, have been distributed to the Highland School District, Medina County, and to the Summit County Main Library for distribution to all branches including the bookmobiles. Thanks to Bill Tucker for handling the distribution.

One copy was sent to former chapter president, Mauri Peterson, now active in St. Pete (Florida) Audubon. Mauri, had to suffer through another Christmas count in a T-shirt this year. She sends a big

thanks to all of us up here in the frozen north.

Robert and Dianne Oliger, owners of Oliger Seed, the company that distributes through Copley Feed and Supply the wild bird we sell each year, sent the chapter a check for \$100. Thanks to the Oligers and Mark and Nancy Roesner of Copley Seed for making the annual seed sale a success.

Protecting Migratory Songbirds

In 2000, Congress passed and President Clinton signed into law, first-of-its-kind legislation that directly helps songbirds by helping to restore and conserve their wintering habitat, thus ensuring they make it back to our backyards in the spring. The law established a fund to support partnership programs to enhance habitat in the Caribbean and Latin America, where approximately five million birds of 500 species, including species such as one of the most endangered birds in North America - the Kirtland's Warbler, Hermit Thrush, endangered Black-capped Vireo and Kentucky Warbler, spend their winters. This is especially important for threatened and endangered species. Much like many Audubon-supported measures, funding for the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act must be secured by Congress each and every year for the next five years. We will actively work with Congress to see that they fully fund this act for Fiscal Year 2002 - and again, we'll need your help to succeed. We'll keep you posted! Talk with Michele Tucker to learn how you can help.

Pick Your Tree

Our nation has many symbols, yet we have no national tree. We have the bald eagle as our national emblem, the *Star Spangled Banner* as our national anthem, and the rose as our national flower. But no tree! Well, the National Arbor Day Foundation is offering all Americans the opportunity of choosing our national tree. The deadline for voting is April 26, the day before National Arbor Day.

Here's the deal: Visit the foundation's Web site, arborday.com, and cast your vote. You can select from a list of 21 candidates which includes all the state trees, or you can write in the tree of your choice. For those without Internet access, mail your choice to The National Arbor Day Foundation, Nebraska City, NE 68410.



Full Christmas Count Report!

The Christmas Count, Weather or not!

This year's Christmas count started out at a rather balmy of 47 degrees — then went down hill. By the end of the day the temperature was 17 degrees with winds gusting to 37 mph and blowing snow. The wind chill factor was -24 in the afternoon. The birds were hunkered down against the blustery weather and birders were just hunkered down. The total of 18,638 for the count was down considerably compared with last year's 25,540. The total species number was

down to 74 from 82 last year.

Forty-four parties spent a total of 188.25 hours counting birds in the field. The 44 parties spent 103.75 hours on foot (37 hours less than last year) and walked 111.5 miles (almost 30 miles less than last year). Owlers spent 8.75 hours and covered 49.25 miles (28 miles more than last year). Forty-eight counters spent 40.5 hours counting birds at feeders. A big thanks to Marie Morgan and Bert Szabo for supplying the bird count data.

pied-billed grebe	1	killdeer	1	golden-crowned kinglet	57
great blue heron	27	ring-billed gull	1836	eastern bluebird	78
Canada goose	2332	herring gull	21	hermit thrush	2
tundra swan	6	rock dove	945	American robin	53
mute swan	6	mourning dove	489	northern mockingbird	1
gadwall	4	eastern screech-owl	4	European starling	2007
American black duck	17	great horned owl	6	cedar waxwing	813
mallard	1116	barred owl	1	yellow-rumped warbler	3
green-winged teal	1	belted kingfisher	6	American tree sparrow	555
canvasback	2	red-bellied. woodpecker	96	field sparrow	1
redhead	1	yellow-bellied sapsucker	1	fox sparrow	1
ring-necked duck	159	downy woodpecker	216	song sparrow	82
bufflehead	3	hairy woodpecker	52	swamp sparrow	14
common goldeneye	7	northern flicker	22	white-throated sparrow	140
hooded merganser	9	pileated woodpecker	8	white-crowned sparrow	5
ruddy duck	2	blue jay	601	dark-eyed junco	618
northern harrier	1	American crow	1012	northern cardinal	746
sharp-shinned hawk	3	horned lark	8	rusty blackbird	7
cooper,s hawk	12	black-capped chickadee	873	common grackle	18
red-shouldered hawk	3	tufted titmouse	305	brown-headed cowbird	3
red-tailed hawk	54	red-breasted nuthatch	1	purple finch	2
American kestrel	8	white-breasted nuthatch	184	house finch	606
merlin	2	brown creeper	7	American goldfinch	752
wild turkey	37	Carolina wren	32	house sparrow	1485
American coot	46	winter wren	2		

Feeder counters included: Lynn W. Baker, Jo Anne Barnes, Irene Barrington, Helen M. Becker, John Daily, Helen Dessent, Cecil Dobbins, Joanne Dobbins, Ann Falor, Pat Fricker, Lois Frisbee, Carole Gatian, Jamie Gerard, Carlin F. Gibbs, Sue Henniger, Beth Hoffman, Donald Hogle, Betty Hudkins, Hedy Jones, Lucille Kiehl, Barbara Klewe, Janet Kucko, Carolyn Liebmann, Elaine Martin, Ruth May, James McIntyre, Hallie Meisner, Bill Meyers, Bill Miloscia, Amy Mitch, Gary Moats, Lew Monegan, Betty Peabody, Nancy Post, Norm Richenbacher, Sally Richenbacher, Peg Robinson, Doris Rooney, Louise Royce, Grace Rymer, Cheryl Schnuth, Elizabeth Sonneck, Arthur Sutton, Margaret Thorp, Sue Tolley, Patricia Webb, Patricia Zeigler, John Zevenbergen.

Field counters: Deedra Allen, David Belcastro, Peg Bobel, Rob Bobel, John Bowler, Michael Bowler, Peter Bowler, Seth Brenneman, Dave Brumfield, Jenny Brumfield, Garnet Bryne, Don Burlett, Doug Caesar, John Cameron, Bob Capanna, Ann Chasar, Dwight Chasar, Pat Coy, Jonathan Dean, Phyllis Devlin, Fred Dinkelbach, Mike Edgington, Rich Ettinger, Fred Fricker, Bob Furst, Linda Gannon, Christa Glatte, Ann Gulbransen, Martin Gulbransen, Rick Hanger, Mary Lou Hura, Claire Johnson, Diane Johnson, Nate Johnson, Tracey Johnson, Susan Jones, Barbara Kaplan, Winnie Kennedy, Isaac Kerns, Sheila Kerns, Dave Kersten, Gene Kovach, Linda Kovach, Diane Kurapka, Karl Liske, Fred Losi, Alice Luddington, Dave Luddington, Jamie Mackenzie, Christine McCorkle, Beth McGuire, Wilbur McQueen, Kathy Mock, Fred Montague, Marie Morgan, Paul Motts, George Nahmi, Rich Nicholls, Bill Osborne, Joyce Pelz, Wolfgang Pelz, Jim Reyda, David Richards, Maryanne Romito, Tom Romito, Larry Rosche, Sterling Saxe, Steven Sheppard, Walter Starcher, Woody Stover, Bert Szabo, Karin Tanquist, Judy Tisdale, Jim Tomko, Michelle Tucker, Dan Van Auken, Doug Van Auken, Steven Van Auken, Doug Vogus, James W. Vogus, Beverly Weigl, Jeffrey Weigl, Jeff Wert, Clyde Witt, Howard Zehnder, Marian Zehnder, Bill Zelesnik.