



GREATER AKRON

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Witt's End

Size Shouldn't Matter

We were enjoying dinner at the Dooley's home when Allan mentioned that while birding in the Outer Banks recently, he could only hazard a guess at numerous LBJs (little brown jobs) that flitted from one side of the road to the other. As the birds increased in size, however, identification became easier. A meadowlark, for instance, proved no challenge, even flying at the speed of full-tilt-boogie.

And while eating lunch at home one afternoon, Susan and I glanced up and saw a pair of bald eagles circling directly overhead. As I tripped over myself running for my binoculars, Susan said, "Hey, they've got an eight-foot wingspan, white heads and white tails. What else could they be?"

And so it goes. Big birds are easy to see and thus easy to identify — even if we barely see them as they zip past. Spend an afternoon perched on North Lookout at Hawk Mountain and listen as the designated raptor counters call out the identification of some species, three miles away. Eagles are easy. Red shoulder hawks, red tail hawks, merlins — a piece of cake. Sharpies and Cooper's hawks are more of a challenge. Kestrels get confused with mourning doves. And LBJs are often called, "mystery bird."

Well, all birds are created equal in the eyes of a lister. I ended 2002 with, coincidentally, 222 species. Not a good year, not a bad year. Kind of in the middle. But as I reviewed the list I noticed large birds dominated. I'd guess that nearly two-thirds of the listed species were duck-size or larger.

And where is this headed? It's wintertime and humans are *supposed* to mull over such minutiae of life. It's the single thing that separates us from the grizzly bear. Now is the time to dig out your field guides and plan for the birding year ahead. While I eschew New Year's resolutions, I'm making plans to concentrate more on those little, skittering things in the bushes come springtime. The big things seem to take care of themselves.

Meetings — We Got 'Em!

The chapter holds meetings once a month on the 4th Tuesday, except for July, August and December, when there are no meetings. The GAAS monthly meetings are held at the Shady Hollow Pavilion in the Sand Run MetroPark in the Merriman Valley. The entrance is off Sand Run Parkway, just east of the ford. Check the MetroParks Web site for a map of Sand Run Park. The pavilion is 1.3 miles west of N. Portage Path Drive and .9 mile east of Sand Run Road (or N41° 08.029' W81° 33.586' if you need the precise location).

The doors open at 7:00 and the meeting starts at 7:30. Meetings are free and open to the public. The new meeting place comes with the same guarantee as the old place: If you don't like our free programs we'll return your entrance fee, twofold!

January 28, Dwight and Ann Chasar will be back with another information, fun-filled program, discussing the dynamics of changing bird populations and nesting habits in our area. If you saw their great presentation last year, you know that Dwight has a way of making statistics fun. And he promises — no pop quiz.

February 25 we'll have extraordinary wildlife artist Julie Zickefoose. If you read *Bird Watcher's Digest* or many other wildlife publications you've seen her work. Now's your chance to meet the artist and see how she produces the beautiful pictures. Zickefoose is also a former field biologist for The Nature Conservancy.

We're hearing a lot of bad news about Venezuela these days. However, on **March 25**, Beth and Steve Cagan will tell us about their trip to Venezuela in conjunction with a conservation project involving the Cleveland Zoo. Their presentation includes some information on birds of the region and quite a bit on the conservation efforts underway there.

April 22, (Earth Day!) We'll feature chapter member Larry Rosche, well known for his birding skills, books and videos. Only this time, Larry is bringing us something new, a program on his recently published book on dragonflies and damselflies. This is a program not to be missed if you want to learn more about those dainty insects that seem to have only two speeds — blinding and stop.

May 27, Well, watch this space ...

June 24, Annual picnic — time and place to be announced.

Count Birds From the Warmth of Your Home

All across North America, our birds face survival challenges ranging from loss of habitat to introduced predators and diseases such as West Nile Virus. The Sixth Annual Great Backyard Bird Count — February 14-17 — promises to add important new information to our understanding of birds' movement and overall health by focusing our common birds as well as on birds of special concern.

Once again, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society call on birders of every age and skill level to make the count possible. "We need every birder to join us," says Frank Gill, Audubon senior vice president of science. "The Great Backyard Bird Count has become a vitally important means of gathering data to help birds, but it can't happen unless people take part. Whether you're a novice or an expert, we need you to take part and help us help birds."

A project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Audubon, with sponsorship from Wild Birds Unlimited, the GBBC combines high-tech Web tools with an army of citizen-scientist bird observers. The GBBC asks families, individuals, classrooms, and community groups to count the numbers and kinds of birds that visit their feeders, local parks, schoolyards, and other areas during any or all of the four count days. Participants enter their sightings at BirdSource, www.birdsource.org/gbbc. The state-of-the-art website was developed by Audubon and the Cornell Lab.

Begun in 1998, the GBBC has engaged more than a quarter of a million Americans of all ages and backgrounds, and united them in the effort to keep common birds common. Too many species are already showing population declines. GBBC 2003 will put the spotlight on birds that appear on Audubon's WatchList, an accounting of bird species in decline or at conservation risk due to dwindling habitat and other threats.

Audubon and Cornell are asking participants to pay special attention to the nearly 200 species of birds on the WatchList. The site will include features relating to these birds and what participants can do to help them.

Birding Trails & Festivals Project Successful

To assist communities in capitalizing on the trend of deriving economic benefits from conserving natural areas, Audubon Ohio in January 2000 launched its Birding Trails and Festivals Project. The goal of the project was to promote birding trails and festivals throughout Ohio. Audubon Ohio provided workshops to help communities develop these tourist activities.

Workshops were funded with the assistance of the Ohio Division of Wildlife, the Ohio Environmental Education Fund, and the Cleveland Foundation.

The Audubon Ohio project accomplished its goals more rapidly than was

thought possible. A number of Ohio birding events are firmly established or well developed, and the birding trails and festival movement is now self-sustaining. For more information about the festivals, visit ohio@audubon.org.

Important Bird Area Program

The Important Bird Area (IBA) program is an international effort to identify, conserve and monitor a network of sites that provide essential habitat for bird populations. Birdlife International (www.birdlife.net) began the IBA program in Europe in 1985. Since then, Birdlife partners in more than 100 countries have joined together to build the global IBA network.

Audubon (BirdLife Partner for the U.S.) has been working since 1995 to identify and conserve hundreds of IBAs throughout the United States. Important Bird Areas often support a significant proportion of one or more species total population. Through the IBA program, we're setting science-based conservation priorities and engaging local action to safeguard the most essential sites for America's bird populations. We work with local communities and stakeholder groups, scientists, local, state and federal governments, and non-governmental organizations. By cooperating on essential habitat conservation, we're building a healthier world for birds and all biodiversity-including our own species.

IBA Scorecard:

- 46 state programs underway;
- 97 staff members Involved;
- 39 states with paid staff;

A Snipe by Another Name

Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) now refers to the species common to Europe and Africa. Wilson's Snipe (*Gallinago delicata*) is the species found here in the Americas.

- 7 states with volunteer staff;
- 10 states with documented inventories (including Ohio);
- 1500 IBAs identified;
- 36 million acres encompassed in identified IBAs;
- 6,000 participants involved.

Audubon Magazine, in the December issue, features Audubon Pennsylvania's successful IBA program as an example of how the IBA program, demonstrating implementation at the state and local level to achieve conservation. In addition to the article, a pullout map is included that highlights a number of IBAs throughout the country, representing a diversity of different habitats, species, and threats. To read the article and the text of the pullout map visit audubon.org/bird/iba.

New Watchlist Available

Despite the exciting recovery of endangered birds like the bald eagle and peregrine falcon, more than one-quarter of America's birds are in trouble or decline. First released in October 2003, the Audubon WatchList identifies 201 species of birds in need of conservation. These birds show either significantly decreasing numbers or restricted range, or are under other threats.

The Audubon WatchList serves to underscore some disturbing trends; since 1970, many songbird species have declined by as much as 50 percent or more. The California thrasher and the southeast's painted bunting both show declines in excess of 50 percent, while the cerulean warbler of the eastern U.S. has declined by more than 70 percent. Henslow's sparrow from the Midwest has dangerously dropped by 80 percent. The Hawaiian 'Akikiki from Kauai has dropped from about 6,800 birds in the early 70's to only 1,000 individuals today.

Audubon's WatchList 2002 aims to highlight U.S. birds of concern to the general public in order to increase support of and public involvement in bird conservation efforts of Audubon and other organizations that are part of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative. The constituent groups of NABCI are working together to develop and implement bird conservation plans across the continent. Bird conservation initiatives that are part of NABCI include Partners In Flight, the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, North American Waterbird Conservation Plan, North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and the Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative. Audubon's involvement in these conservation plans is currently focused on the identification and conservation of Important Bird Areas.

The Audubon WatchList 2002 uses species assessments carried out by some of the NABCI partners

including Partners In Flight, BirdLife International, and the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan to place species in one of three categories:

Red — Species in this category of global conservation concern are declining rapidly, have very small populations or limited ranges, and face major conservation threats.

Yellow — Category includes the majority of species identified. Yellow-list birds are declining, but at slower rates than those in the red category. These typically are birds of national conservation concern, and those that can be saved most cost-effectively.

Green — Species in this category are not declining, have unknown trends, or have very large population sizes. These species are not included on the Audubon WatchList.

For the first time in 2002, the Audubon WatchList includes birds of Hawaii and Puerto Rico, in addition to the birds of mainland North America. To view the WatchList and species account for all 201 red and yellow-listed species visit audubon.org/bird/watchlist.

U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan Website

The United States Shorebird Conservation Plan, a partnership committed to restoring and maintaining stable and self-sustaining populations of shorebirds in the U.S. and throughout the Western Hemisphere, has launched a new Web site. Hosted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, shorebirdplan.fws.gov, makes publicly available both national and regional shorebird planning documents, information about current activities of the initiative and related shorebird programs, as well as information about the broader North American Bird Conservation Initiative.

New Library Service

ConserveOnline is a public library, created and maintained by The Nature Conservancy in partnership with NatureServe, The Society for Conservation Biology, US Forest Service, and the American Museum of Natural History. The library makes conservation tools, techniques, and experience available to a broad community of conservation practitioners. This site is intended to provide information and support to anyone making conservation-related decisions, from the staff of conservation organizations to land managers at government agencies to local land trusts to private landowners. ConserveOnline is an open forum for sharing successes and failures, and for connecting scientific research with field-based conservation practice. To view and explore the resources of ConserveOnline visit conserveonline.org