



GREATER AKRON

AUDUBON *Matters*

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Witt's End

By Clyde Witt, editor

Birds of Ohio

I was recently sent a new birding field guide to review. My first thought was, "Do we really need another field guide?" The publisher must have known I was sucker for field guides. Between Susan and I we have shelves filled with multiple editions of nearly every field guide published. This one, *Birds of Ohio*, is different. The title should be your first clue.

From the moment I unwrapped the book I knew it was different. It *felt* different. How many books feel different? This guide has rounded corners! Now, does that make sense for a book that will be jammed in pockets and bags many times in a day's outing? It's one of those things that make you ask why someone had not done it before.

This field guide may be the best designed and planned guide I've ever come into contact with. It's as if the author and publisher looked at the shortcomings of all the books on the shelf and evaded the usual traps.

Birds of Ohio is much more than a field guide. In fact, it's such a great book I'm reluctant to take it into the field, however I will at first chance. Author Jim McCormac is well known in birding circles here in Ohio. He's been secretary of the Ohio Bird Records Committee for the past six years. He has coauthored this guide with nature guide writer Gregory Kennedy.

The features of this book are many. Here are some I found most appealing. The book catalogs 342 of the 412 species known to have been seen in Ohio. All are illustrated in beautiful color drawings. There's a checklist of all 412 for us twitchers. Each bird gets its own page, with many illustrations of the birds in various plumages. Family groupings are color-coded for fast locating. And the color coding is on the top and sides of the guide as well as the back cover.

Each species account includes range maps and *seasonal abundance graphs*! Also on the page is detailed information about size, habitat, nesting, feeding, voice, similar species and best viewing sites.

Let me say that again: Best viewing sites. In the introduction is a map of the state with 100 birding spots identified. Following that are details of 20 of the more popular places.

Hey, no more fumbling for the index at the back of the book. The publishers have printed those pages in a different color to jump out at you. Also in the back are 51 species considered regular occurring rarities. Kind of a contradiction in terms, but we know what they mean.

This book is a breakthrough in field guides and I predict we'll see more regional guides like it. It makes sense to have a guide for an area where you spend probably 80 percent of your birding time. People new to birding will find this book particularly helpful because it's easy to use. More experienced birders will appreciate the abundance of information it contains.

Lone Pine publishers have done a superb job in bringing to the world what we two million birders here in Ohio already know: Our state offers a prime location for watching birds. For \$20 this is the best buy you'll find in a field guide. If you can't find the book in local shops, call 800 528-3541 and get your copy. (see <http://www.cppnet.com/gaas/>)

Programs for May/June

The chapter holds meetings once a month on the 4th Tuesday, except for July, August and December. (See special note about this June's meeting.) 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. Doors open at 7:00 p.m.

and the meeting starts at 7:30 p.m. Meetings are free and open to the public.

This month we will host Dr. Lauchlan Fraser from the University of Akron Biology department. He will give us an update on UA research activity at Bath Nature Preserve. A lot more than just garlic mustard has been growing out there. Here's your opportunity to ask questions of experts from the site.

June 6: The annual picnic. This is going to be a bit different. First, you'll note the meeting will be on a Sunday. We'll meet about 8 A.M. at the Horseshoe Pond picnic area in the CVNP. It's located on Major Road, west of Riverview Road, south of Peninsula. We'll do

Phone Home

The Greater Akron Audubon telephone number has been changed to (330) 920-9138 for Voice Mail. This service has been expertly handled by chapter member Joyce Pelz.

some morning walks to work up an appetite. Then we'll have a brunch in the pavilion, all in cooperation with members of the Western Cleveland Audubon Society. Also, attendees are encouraged to bring some plants for an exchange. Bring a food item of your choice, along with a beverage, forks, knives, plates etc. Charcoal and lighter will be provided. There's a great little pond if you want to challenge the local bluegill population.

It's Census Time, Again!

The dates for this year's premiere summertime event, the Greater Akron Audubon Society's Annual Summer Bird Count (our 27th) are from Friday, June 11 through Sunday, June 20th. It's just like the Christmas Bird Count only substitute cold weather and snow with mosquitoes and sweat. The census covers as much of Summit County as possible. We count all bird species and total numbers of individuals, similar to the Christmas Bird Count. Participants are assigned an area to cover and have the 10 day period in which to census it.

Your participation is citizen science at its best. In the recently published third edition of *A Field Book of Birds of the Cleveland Region*, editor Larry Rosche says "The ongoing Greater Akron Audubon Society Summer Bird Count is one of the most important breeding bird monitoring programs in Ohio." Rosche is also editing *Birds of Cleveland*, first written in 1950 by Arthur B. Williams. This book, covering a seven county area, will summarize bird species distribution from 1950 to present. For both these publications the GAAS census has helped to provide data for Summit County.

If you'd like to volunteer, or just ask questions, you can do so at an Audubon meeting or by contacting either Doug Vogus at 330-865-0776 (email vogeyeye@yahoo.com) or Ann Chasar at 330-467-3664 (email ascdwc43@yahoo.com). We hope those who counted last year will help again. These people will automatically be contacted. If you would like to help out and are not sure of your birding skills or just want to bird with someone else, we may be able to pair you up with other people. You do not have to be an Audubon member, nor live in Summit County to participate. The more people we have, the better we can cover the area.

What Matters Most?

The results of the 2004 *Issue Priorities* survey, which was sent to Chapter Presidents last fall, have been sent to Chapters and are now available at <http://www.audubon.org/local/cso/docs/2004surveyresults.doc>.

Chapter input is invaluable in identifying the most important priorities for Audubon's policy efforts on key environmental issues. The top five chapter priorities are 1) public lands protection, 2) bird conservation, 3) the Endangered Species Act, 4) wetlands and estuary protection, and 5) the Clean Water Act.

"It is encouraging to learn that so many of the issues that are important to chapters are the very same issues identified as priorities by Audubon's board, and are also those where our government relations staff is actively engaged," said Audubon director of Grassroots Programs, Catherine Grant. "We have heard from chapters about other issues that are critically important, issues to which

we could devote more time, attention, and resources. These are areas where we will look to increase capacity, and explore new ways to exert influence and demonstrate leadership."

Here's some details on the top three issues:

- 1 — PUBLIC LANDS PROTECTION Habitat loss is the number one threat to America's declining bird populations, and the 726 million acres set aside by the federal government as public lands have vast potential to sustain America's birds. Audubon is recognized as a leader in protecting America's 540 wildlife refuges, and many are or will be recognized as IBAs. Audubon is advocating use of IBAs to direct funding for federal land acquisition, and our state offices and chapters have been successful in passing legislation at the state level recognizing IBAs in the management of state-owned lands in New York and Washington.
- 2 — BIRD CONSERVATION In the past year, Audubon's public policy office helped secure congress, first major increase in funding for the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, as well as \$38 million from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act to protect and restore wetlands. In addition, Audubon has remained an active voice in the bird conservation issues of the day, stopping the use of bird-killing pesticides, and working to keep the Migratory Bird Treaty Act a strong protector of America's birds.
- 3 — ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT Audubon Chapters clearly have recognized the importance of the Endangered Species Act as a potent weapon for defending natural ecosystems as well as a key tool for saving America's most imperiled birds. In recent years, Audubon's public policy office has worked to protect the Endangered Species Act from a wide range of attacks by special interests, including proposals to exempt the Defense Department from the law, and a proposal to encourage leather importers and pet importers to exploit endangered species in foreign countries.

Wake-up Call for Congress

National Audubon dispatched a letter to all 535 Members of Congress calling on them to celebrate International Migratory Bird Day by supporting five key programs aimed at protecting and restoring important bird habitat. Habitat loss is the single largest reason for declining bird populations.

The programs U.S. lawmakers were urged to support are the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act — an under funded program aimed at saving songbirds; the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Migratory Bird Management Program, which provides critical support for bird monitoring and research; Joint Ventures - regional public/private bird conservation partnerships; the North American Wetlands Conservation Act - aimed at restoring and managing wetlands for migratory birds and other wildlife; and State Wildlife Grants Program - providing resources for effective bird and wildlife conservation.

In addition, on Wednesday, May 5th, the Resources Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives passed a measure that includes provision to enhance and expand the

Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, a top priority for Audubon. The Committee voted unanimously to continue the program for another 3 years, increase the funding level to \$5 million in FY06, \$10 million in FY07, \$15 million in FY08, and allow for increased participation by Canada, where many of the migratory birds spend part of their life cycle in the boreal forests.

The measure now moves to the House floor for a final vote expected within the next few weeks, and then on to the U.S. Senate

Going, Going, Gone!

Recently, Audubon Alaska Executive Director Stan Senner was interviewed on the statewide Alaska Public Radio Network in regard to Audubon's lawsuit on the sale of Oil Leases in the Northwest National Petroleum Reserve -Alaska. On that day, Audubon attorneys filed a motion for a preliminary injunction to block the Bureau of Land Management from going ahead with a lease sale in early June. Citing a lack of balance in the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) plans for energy development in western Arctic Alaska, Audubon joined other conservation organizations in February to challenge in court a plan to open 8.8 million acres in the Reserve. Audubon challenged a January 22 decision by Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton because that decision did not consider any alternatives that balanced oil development and wildlife protection, nor did the decision give permanent protection to any of the Reserve's most important wildlife habitats.

Energy Bill Falls Flat

The U.S. Senate voted down an effort to resurrect S.2095, the energy bill that fails to benefit U.S. energy security while helping special interests, proving that even the slimmed down version of the bill was too big to fit through the door of the chamber.

"We're pleased a majority of senators saw this bill as being short on solutions and big on benefits to big special interests," said Audubon Chief Operating Officer Robert Perciasepe. "This sends a strong message to senate leaders that until they offer a bill that makes substantive changes to our nation's energy policy, reduces our dependence on fossil fuels, stresses conservation and energy efficiency, and addresses the critical infrastructure problems facing the nation, any energy package they present is simply out of gas."

Audubon Ohio Clean Water Work

The Joyce Foundation has awarded the National Audubon Society a major two-year grant to integrate efforts to clean up the nation's surface waters with efforts to protect Important Bird Areas in which those waters are a prominent feature. The Joyce grant will provide \$350,000 to Audubon over two years, beginning in July. At least \$150,000 of the grant will be spent in Ohio during that period.

Audubon applied for the grant to address the continued deficiencies in federal clean water programs. Although more than 30 years have passed since the enactment of the Clean Water Act, 45 percent of the nation's waters remain too degraded for swimming or fishing. In Ohio, roughly

half of our river and stream miles and 40 percent of our lakes are impaired for one or more uses.

Surface water is the dominant feature in many of Ohio's Important Bird Areas. Examples include the Sandusky River IBA, the Vermillion River IBA, the Black River IBA, the Chagrin River IBA, the Grand River IBA and the Little Miami River IBA, as well as every IBA along Lake Erie, including the Western Lake Erie Basin IBA.

Under the grant, Audubon Ohio will choose five or six IBAs in which surface water is a critical part of the landscape, and in which the State of Ohio is planning to undertake major watershed planning efforts in the coming years. We will train volunteers to study the connection between the water resource and bird populations, develop and implement plans to improve bird habitat through actions to improve water quality, and participate in the State's watershed planning efforts. We will also educate our members on state and federal policy initiatives that impact on water quality, and on how to influence those initiatives.

According to Audubon Ohio Executive Director Jerry Tinianow, "Audubon Ohio welcomes to opportunity to be the proving ground for enhanced efforts to meld bird conservation with watershed protection. Protecting our water resources is critical to Ohio's future."

Unusual Visitors

Some lucky observers were able to see Whooping Cranes in Ohio as recent at April 11. These cranes, which spent a couple days in a farm field in Clermont County and later in Auglaize County, are part of an eastern migratory flock established several years ago in Wisconsin by the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership. The Partnership is a group of non-profit organizations, individuals, and government agencies that has joined forces to bring a migratory flock of Whooping Cranes back to eastern North America. The introduced cranes summer in Wisconsin and winter in Florida and are currently migrating on their northward leg back to Wisconsin. Visit the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership at www.bringbackthecranes.org. Bird watchers should be aware that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has designated Whooping Cranes as endangered. Activities that disturb their feeding, resting or breeding may be deemed a violation of the Endangered Species Act, and subject the violator to criminal penalties. Any observation of the Cranes should be undertaken from a substantial distance.

Calm Before the Storm

With the General Assembly currently in recess, work on the Lake Erie coastal legislation, H.B. 218, has stalled. Work continues behind the scenes, however. The Senate Environment Committee has asked for an opinion from the Ohio Legislative Service Commission on the legal arguments made by proponents and opponents of the legislation at recent hearings.

Audubon Ohio recently sent a letter to each State Senator asking them to oppose the bill unless provisions that expand private ownership of the lakefront and the rights of lakefront owners are removed.