



GREATER AKRON

# AUDUBON *Matters*

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## **Witt's End**

By Clyde Witt, editor

### *Enhance Your Life List by Standing Still*

As we move into the fall birding season, it's educational to review the results of this summer's bird count (see page three). The count is compiled through the efforts of many chapter members and the monumental work of Ann Chaser, Dwight Chaser and Doug Vogel. Based on what's observed in the spring, can we safely predict what we'll see fly by in the fall? Maybe yes, maybe no. But definitely maybe.

One morning during the summer count, Susan and I took a break in the shade. Nine o'clock and already getting hot. We could hear bird activity all around us. Heavy leaf cover, however, prevented us from locating what sounded like a real feast going on. Since you see more birds with your ears than your eyes, we focused our efforts on a single tree about 50 feet from where we stood.

The activity in the branches made the tree seem to vibrate. The challenge became to count and identify birds hidden within the leaves. We had to concentrate to get just a glimpse of color or shape. Birding can be a really tough job at times. How many birds use a single tree in mid June? The answer is plenty when the tree is a nearly ripe mulberry and the weather near-perfect.

We tabulated more than a dozen species of birds, ranging from neon-bright scarlet tanagers to ubiquitous house sparrows. All were frantically tearing thumb-size berries from the stems. Some ate them on the spot. Others dashed off to a safe spot near by. A few grabbed a berry and disappeared. There was a constant parade of other animals as well, chipmunks and squirrels mostly, feasting on what would never become some human's delicious mulberry-rhubarb pie.

## **New Meeting Location**

The good news is that attendance at chapter meetings has increased to the point where we have to change our meeting venue. We're moving just down the road, still in Sand Run Metro Park, to the Mingo Shelter. It's the same place where we hold the chili dinner following the annual Christmas Bird Count. Mingo Shelter is on Sand Run Parkway about 1.3 miles west of Portage Path, or 1.75 miles east of Sand Run Road.

Another slight alteration will be the meeting starting time.

We will be opening the doors at 6:30 pm and the meeting will start *promptly* at 7 pm. We will attempt to hold the business part of the meeting to 15 minutes and get right into the program. This will leave time for socializing and talking with the speaker, two items many of you have asked for.

And speaking of socializing, we'll now have semi-official greeters at the meeting to welcome guests (Anyone who would like to train for a job at Wal-Mart is welcome to volunteer.) and new members. You'll be asked to sign in and wear a name tag. Another addition — look for the jazzy name badges sported by members of the executive committee.

## **Field Trip Not to Miss**

On October 2nd the chapter has the rare opportunity to see one of Ohio's newer ecological discoveries, a bat roost, located in Twinsburg's Liberty Park. If you attended Naturalist Stanley Stine's program last spring, you heard him hint at this discovery, a roost that holds an estimated 4,000 bats of at least four species. Marlo Perdicis of MetroParks Serving Summit County has offered to give us an exclusive look at these bats, up close and personal. Here's what you have to do: We'll meet at the parking lot, located at the Stone House at 5:00 pm. We'll hike back (about 30 minutes) into this special area at sunset when bats emerge from the cave entrance. Although the walk is flat, boots are recommended. You might want to bring along a flashlight and clothing appropriate to the weather. Oh, don't forget the kids. This will be a great family outing.

Directions to the Stone House: The Stone House is located just east of Twinsburg at 9207 Liberty Road. From the intersection of route 82 and route 91 in Twinsburg, it's only about one quarter mile east on route 82 to the turn onto Cannon Road. The road forks by Fat Boy's Pizza (now closed). Take the left fork onto Cannon. Cannon then goes uphill. At the top of the hill is Liberty Road — turn left (you can't turn right). The Stone House is on the right — it is literally an old stone house, and sits by itself, surrounded by meadow. There is a park sign in the front yard of the house.

## **Programs**

Once again, the executive committee has produced a line-up of programs second to none. Here is what the year ahead looks like as of this writing. Be sure to check the

*Audubon Matters*, our Web site and at chapter meetings for any changes.

**September:** We begin the year with one of the more engaging speakers in this part of the country on the subject of Night Migration. Ben Fambrough likes to say “he and his buddies used hang out” at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. His list of “buddies” reads like the Who’s Who of birding. Ben has studied night migration, even to the point of developing his own equipment to record sounds most of us never hear, yet give ornithologist critical data on bird movement. Although September 28 is kind of late in the season, Ben hopes to give us a live demonstration following his presentation. And you won’t believe what Ben’s day job is.

**October 26:** Tom Henry of the ODNR will give us the later information about the most elusive owl species here in the state, barn owls. This once-prevalent bird has essentially disappeared from the state. Or has it? Come learn what Tom has discovered.

**November 23:** Once again we will feature one of Ohio’s preeminent birders, Jim McCormac. Jim is on the Ohio Records Committee and author of the exciting new field guide, *Birds of Ohio*, reviewed in this newsletter last year. Through a special arrangement with Jim’s publisher, we have made arrangements to have a supply of Jim’s book at the meeting for purchase and signing.

**December 19:** The annual Audubon Christmas Count will serve as the chapter meeting this month, as it always does. We’ll have more information later on how you can participate. It will be followed by our traditional Chili Dinner at the Mingo Shelter. Stay tuned.

**January 25:** The chapter’s own, Joyce Pelz has been active in a new statewide initiative called Audubon at Home. This vital program has granted monies to chapters throughout the state for special projects. Along with Casey Tucker who heads the program from the state office, she’ll tell us what’s happening at the local as well as state level and how you can get involved.

**February 22:** Life in the cold. Think it’s cold outside? You’ve got layers of insulation, yet you shiver. How do the animals and plants survive winter’s longest nights and coldest days? Well-known Cleveland Metro Parks naturalist, Wendy Weirich, will talk with us about winter survival. Find out about the fascinating nivian and subnivian zones and what goes on there after dark.

**March 22:** Arachnids. Dr. Todd Blackledge, formerly of University of California – Riverside and now with the University of Akron, has a fascinating web to weave. He will give us a general survey of the evolution of different types of webs, highlighting locally common species of web builders. If time permits he’ll talk about silk and why biotech is so interested in what nature does as a matter of course.

**April 26:** Galapagos Islands. What has become a tradition, we will once more travel to a remote part of the globe,

all expenses paid, with Mark and Claire Purdy. Mark, known for his attention to detail and interesting photography, along with Claire, known for her ability to strike up a conversation with strangers, will whisk us off to the Galapagos Islands where they commune with lizards, tortoises and an amazing array of birds.

**May 24:** CVNP Wetlands. Larry Feinstein is a biology graduate student at the University of Akron. He is involved in an ongoing project between the University and the Cuyahoga Valley National Park concerning conservation and management of wetlands. Larry says, “We are developing a series of ecological indicators that the National Park System can use to evaluate the health of its wetlands.”

This project has been well-received by the scientific community and NASA has awarded Larry an all-expenses-paid trip to the International Landscape Ecologists Symposium in Las Vegas to present research concerning this project.

**June:** We’ll have the annual picnic, only this time the venue will be different. We are working on a special program as part of the picnic so stay tuned.

## **Summer Count Results**

There is a lot of data to review in the results of the Summer Bird Count completed in June. Ann Chaser wishes to thank everyone who participated. “We are constantly amazed,” says Ann, “that people willingly do this year after year. Some people started when the census was organized in 1978 by Carol Tveekrem.” More recently, others came aboard when the Chasers took it over in 2000. With efforts like this, everything counts. Some people donated five hours, others contribute as much as 50 hours in the ten day period.

What motivates people to do this? Ann says the thing we have in common is a love of birds and nature. “The census is like a scavenger hunt,” she says. “You never know what you’ll find. Is the field sparrow still in that patch of scrub where you found it the last four years?” The question has increasingly become, “Is that patch of scrub still there?”

For the count, Summit County is divided into 29 areas. Green herons, hooded warblers, scarlet tanagers, great-crested and willow flycatchers were found in more than 50 percent of those areas. Baltimore orioles, rose-breasted grosbeaks, indigo buntings, and towhees were found in most areas. What a colorful county we have.

During the census four inches of rain fell on portions of Summit County and temperatures were slightly less than average. Most precipitation occurred in the late afternoons with little impact on morning counts. Perhaps a large crop of aerial insects accounted for the highest numbers ever for chimney swifts, rough-winged swallows, phoebes and blue-birds. Ruby-throated hummingbirds were the highest ever, partly because of feeder watchers. Field and edge birds continued to increase with high numbers of blue-winged warblers, catbirds, cardinals, indigo buntings, and gold-finches. Cedar waxwings seemed to be everywhere and

starlings almost doubled their recent census numbers. Where grassland habitat is being preserved, bobolinks, meadowlarks, and savannah sparrows, as well as the select grasshopper and Henslow's sparrows, were found. The count of crows was still down. The sedge wrens and western meadowlark were found at the PPG Lime Lake area, which was included for the first time in years. The western meadowlark brought the total count for the 27 years to 179 summering species.

### **Audubon Ohio Rolls Out New Website**

Have you visited the Audubon Ohio website lately? The Web site has a new look. It's more colorful, easier to use and full of useful information. The site can be found at [www.audubonohio.org](http://www.audubonohio.org).

The Web site was designed by Britt Carr of Oxford, Ohio. Audubon Ohio board member Jim Reid, also of Oxford, coordinated the effort to redesign the web site. Audubon Ohio board chairman Dick Emens generously provided funding for the project. Audubon Ohio also wants to thank Britt for providing a substantial reduction in his normal charge for web design so that we could afford this attractive new look.

The Web site is still a work in progress, as we continue to tweak various links, as well as the content and photos.

### **Ohio Conservationists**

The Ohio League of Conservation Voters, a nonpartisan group committed to promoting conservation through voter education and political action, has released some interesting data on Ohio conservationists. The data was generated through a "list enhancement" project. Under the project, several conservation groups provided their membership lists to OLCV, which then "enhanced" the lists by cross-referencing the lists against public record data about things like voter registration and hunting and fishing licenses. [Audubon Ohio did not participate in the project and did not provide its membership list to OLCV, but did receive a report of data from the project.]

Ohio conservation group members are slightly more Democratic than the general voting population in Ohio, with just more than 30 percent registered as Democrats and just under 30 percent registered as Republicans. The general voting public is roughly equal at just more than 20 percent apiece. The conservation groups have fewer members registered as Independents than the general public - less than 40 percent among participating conservation groups, as opposed to more than 50 percent for the general voting public.

Conservation group members vote far more frequently than the general voting public. More than 25 percent of registered voters have not voted during any of the past five years, whereas only about six percent of conservation voters have been away from the polls for that long. Nearly half of

all conservation voters have missed no more than one election in the past five years, whereas the only a bit more than 25 percent of the general voting public can make the same claim.

More than 80 percent of the total conservation group members on the lists belong to only one of the participating conservation groups. A small percentage - less than five percent - belong to four or more groups.

While women slightly outnumber men among all voters, there is a much greater disparity within conservation groups, with more than 60 percent of all members being women.

### **National Forest Roadless Areas in Trouble**

In a move widely condemned by conservationists, sportsmen's associations, and outdoor recreation groups, the Bush Administration announced plans July 12 to eliminate the Clinton-era Roadless Area Conservation Rule limiting logging and development in 58.5 million acres of national forest. Audubon is calling on Americans who care about the environment to let the Administration know how they feel during the public comment period ending September 14. They can take action at [www.capitolconnect.com/audubon/summary.asp?subject=336](http://www.capitolconnect.com/audubon/summary.asp?subject=336).

"The implementation of the Roadless Rule had more Americans commenting on it and supporting it than any other federal rule in U.S. history. Yet, the administration has ignored the public's clearly expressed desire to protect the last untouched areas of our national forests," said Bob Perciasepe, Audubon's chief operating officer. "We urge those Americans who care about the fate of our nation's forests to once again let the government know how you feel during this public comment period."

### **Cleveland Hosts National Audubon Chapter Relations Committee**

The National Audubon Society's Ad Hoc Chapter Relations Committee met in Cleveland early in August to formulate plans for strengthening the bonds between NAS and its chapters. The meeting, held at the Rocky River Nature Center, was attended by members of the national board of directors, senior national staff people and representatives of several chapters from around the U.S. The Committee is preparing a report and recommendations to be released at the national board meeting in Philadelphia on September 19.

Following the meeting, Committee members and other staff fanned out across the country, presenting details of the report to Audubon chapters and members in order to gather input and suggestions for revisions. The Committee hopes that the board will then be able to adopt specific measures at its meeting on January 29, 2005.

#### **Time to Think Bird Seed**

You bet we're going to have a wild bird seed sale! Not that anyone is asking yet, but we want you to remember to support the chapter's only fund-raising event, please, the annual Wild Bird Seed Sale on November 13. As in the past, orders must be pre-paid. You'll be receiving a special order blank and price list in your mailbox soon.