



GREATER AKRON

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Witt's End

So, Where Are the Birds?

While our compilers digest the numbers from the annual Christmas Count, we can all ponder the fate of birds this winter. At the chili dinner I spoke with some of the other territory leaders and everyone seemed to have the same question: Where were the birds, today? Weather was mild, by count-day standards. No snow. Birds could scatter and find plenty of natural food – except for an Eastern Towhee who fattened up on the feeder at the Nature Realm.

And there's another reason why birds were missing, at least in my area, which includes Waterworks Park in Cuyahoga Falls. Jay Abercrombie, one of my ace counters, found a spot in the park where wrong-headed, misguided individuals have created a feral-cat community.

As Jay says, "The cats are fat, comfortable and dry. 'Compassionate' citizens supply them with food, shelter and care. The cats live in a little compound of pet cages, plastic tarps and food bowls in a shrubby area near a parking lot on the Fit-Trail."

He adds that the colony in Waterworks Park is the best organized he's ever seen. "Someone was always in attendance with them when I was there. There is more than one 'good Samaritan.' They bring bags of food, check on the cats' welfare, etc. I counted about five cats, but I suspect there are more lurking in the brush."

The American Bird Conservancy estimates that as many as one billion birds are killed each year by domestic and feral cats ... If you have a cat keep it indoors. Tell your neighbors to do the same. And if you know the kind-hearted, ill-advised, injudicious folks creating the disgusting cat hobo jungle at Waterworks Park, tell them to get some goldfish for pets and leave the cats to the Red-tailed Hawks.

Programs

January 23 With the recent construction of an electric generating wind turbine on Cleveland's lakefront we felt it would be timely to have Mark Shieldcastle, bird researcher from the Black Swamp Bird Observatory, speak with us on this controversial subject. Are turbines a threat to migrating birds? Hear what Mark has to say.

February 27 If you've ever met chapter member Jen Brumfield you can't help but be carried away by her enthusiasm and love of birds and dragonflies -- along with just about everything else in nature. Now a naturalist and premiere wildlife artist, Jen will reveal what birds have taught her - - some lessons we can all learn: "What Birds Have Taught Me." And she promises to bring along some of her recent art. And if you've never met Jen, you're in for a real treat. Bring the kids. They need to hear Jen's story.

It's a long time until spring, however, let me tell you what we have after the snow melts. **March 27** We have a special program. Akron author Ann McClain Roher has been hand-feeding and observing Black-capped Chickadees at F. A. Seiberling Nature Realm for ten years. For nearly four years, Ann hand-fed, on a almost daily basis, the same alpha male, "Mr. Picky," forming the longest casual observation recorded of an individual chickadee. Based on this, her book *Mr. Picky and Me: Lessons from a Master Chickadee* (Aptos, California: New Brighton Books), presents the most intimate view of this familiar species. Reviewed favorably by Audubon and birding experts, the book is written for a general audience, with an inside-the-flock perspective.

Special for Greater Akron Audubon, Ann will discuss topics such as behavioral details to enhance chickadee observation, advice for hand-feeding chickadees with minimal stress to the birds or the environment, and findings from her years of observation.

An exhibit about the book and the Nature Realm chickadees is at F. A. Seiberling Nature Realm Visitors Center through March 31.

April 24 Dwight Chaser, chapter member and one of the more knowledgeable birders on this part of the planet, will introduce us to Cleveland's wealth of ornithologists, "History of Northeast Ohio Ornithologists." These are fascinating people on whose experience we have all built.

May 22 Chapter President Mark Purdy, along with our official court jester, Claire Purdy, will share the experience of their recent trip to Namibia. Wedged between the Kalahari and the chilly South Atlantic, off Africa's west coast, Namibia has deserts, seascapes, bushwalking and boundlessness. Mark and Claire promise to reveal all.

Our annual picnic will be held June 26 at the Bath Nature Preserve. Greg Smith from the University of Akron will talk with us about American Kestrels.

The chapter holds its meetings the fourth Tuesday of the month, except for December when we do the Christmas Count. June is our annual picnic. Meetings are held at the Mingo Shelter in Sand Run MetroPark in the Merriman Valley. The entrance is off Sand Run Parkway, east of the ford. Check MetroParks Maps at www.summitmetroparks.org for a map of Sand Run Park. Doors open at 6:30 and the meeting starts at 7:00. We usually start with a short business session before the main program. Meetings are open to the public and you are welcome to bring a friend. Plan to stay after the meeting to enjoy refreshments served by our stellar hospitality committee.

You Can Go To ... Ohio's Birding Hotspots

(A big thanks to Mark Purdy, president, who jotted these notes while the rest of us were glued to Jim's excellent presentation.)

At November's chapter meeting, Jim McCormac of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife noted that Ohio is an excellent state for birding, with 417 documented species. However, some of these are rarities; thus, an Ohio life list of 300 or more species is considered quite an achievement. Jim then described 12 of his favorite birding locations, categorized by season:

Spring

- Magee Marsh & Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge: The premier birding spot in Ohio. Great for Spring migrants (April/May) and hawks (March). The Blue Jay spectacle happens mid to late May.
- Greenlawn Cemetery (Columbus): Migrants because of its proximity to the Scioto River. Be sure to check the sweet gum trees.
- Killbuck/Funk Bottoms: Shorebirds, waterfowl, and Sandhill Cranes. Good in late March and fall months, too.

Summer

- Shawnee State Forest: 60,000 acres. Woodland breeders, including Cerulean Warbler. Excellent plant life in addition to birds. Good place for Ruffed Grouse. Botany Weekend this year is May 4-6. The nearby Edge of Appalachia, a Nature Conservancy preserve, is also excellent.
- Mohican State Forest: More than 100 breeding species. Hemlock ravines good for birds generally more northerly. Lyon Falls Trail is excellent.
- Oak Openings & Kitty Todd preserves (near Toledo): Many rare plants. About 136 breeding bird species. Good for Golden-winged Warbler, also snipe and Least Bittern. Summer Tanager, Blue Grosbeak, Yellow Rail...

Fall

- Hoover Reservoir (near Columbus): 31 species of shorebird. Falcons. Good mudflats when water level drops. Good in late August to October. Spillway below dam is good. Phalaropes, godwits, Buff-breasted Sandpiper.
- C.J. Brown Reservoir (near Springfield): Terns, ducks,

shorebirds. November may see Red-throated Loon.

- Cleveland Lakefront: Edgewater Park – Brant. Burke Airport - Snowy Owl. East 72nd Street Lakefront Park – Little Gull, kittiwakes. Dike 14 – sparrows (October), but need permission. Sims Park – three species of scoter. Eastlake Power Plant – jaegers, gulls, mergansers, Purple Sandpiper (mid November). Mentor Headlands also good.

Winter

- The Wilds (near Zanesville): Raptors - Rough-legged Hawk, Golden Eagle, Prairie Falcon, Long-eared and Short-eared Owls.
- Woodlawn Cemetery (downtown Toledo): Conifer trees and birches good for winter finches. Redpolls, crossbills, grosbeaks. Goshawk also.
- Lorain Harbor and Avon Lake Power Plant: Gulls (Glaucous, Iceland,...) and ducks (Greater Scaup, Goldeneye...). February is good for gulls.

Ohio Winter Bird Atlas 2007

The Black Swamp Bird Observatory is coordinating the 2007 Ohio Winter Bird Atlas and it needs your help. The Atlas is conducted during the month of January anywhere in Ohio. They are looking for people to count birds on a weekly basis if possible (1-4 hours a morning at your favorite birding spot or pick a quadrangle block near you from the Ohio Gazetteer DeLorme). Anything you can do would be great. This is a great opportunity to venture out with friends and contribute to the Ohio winter bird knowledge. More information is available on the website www.bsobird.org or call the Observatory (419-898-4070) and they will send you an information packet or answer your questions.

Great Lakes Water Wars Explained

The following book review was prepared by Audubon Ohio Executive Director Jerry Tinianow.

Peter Annin's recently released book, *The Great Lakes Water Wars*, provides outstanding background on the current struggle to ratify the Great Lakes Basin Water Resources Compact. While the Compact has only recently burst into the headlines, it represents the culmination of disputes that go back for over a century, and that are likely to be with us for decades to come, regardless of whether the Compact is ratified or withdrawn.

Annin identifies numerous efforts that have been undertaken during the past hundred years to transport large volumes of water both out of and into the Great Lakes Basin. He starts with the City of Chicago's project at the turn of the last century to reverse the course of the Chicago River so that Chicago's sewage would be transported away from Lake Michigan and into the Mississippi River system. Annin reviews other subsequent projects in Wisconsin, Ontario, Indiana and Ohio, including Akron's battle for control of the upper Cuyahoga River. In each instance, Annin describes the interstate and international policy rifts caused by the projects, demonstrating why the need for a new bi-national agreement and related interstate commerce to govern diversions and withdrawals of water from the Great Lakes has become so

glaringly apparent.

Annin is an excellent researcher, drawing on numerous original sources and interviews with key water policymakers throughout the Great Lakes Basin. He takes a highly technical topic and turns it into a pleasant read, using a narrative style that weaves a surprisingly entertaining story.

Reading *The Great Lakes Water Wars* gives one a renewed sense of why ratification of the Great Lakes Compact is so urgent. Annin explains in well-documented terms why the current regulatory structure is wholly insufficient to protect the Great Lakes against growing demands from other regions and even other continents for their waters. He makes clear why it is so essential for citizens throughout the Basin, and particularly here in Ohio, to demand that the Compact be ratified, and ratified now.

Scholarships Available

Once again this year, scholarship funds are available to participants in the Audubon Hog Island Leadership Camp for Chapter leaders. Camp will be held in Maine on August 19-25, 2007.

Approximately 30 national scholarships will be given on a first-come, first-serve basis. Each scholarship will provide: \$200 participant to those with a \$200 match from their Chapter and \$300/participant contribution, to complete the total fee of \$700.

This is a great opportunity for chapter leaders of the present and future to obtain program-aligned training and background on national programs as well as chapter leadership and administration. Details and registration links are available online at <http://www.audubon.org/local/leadershipWorkshop.html>.



Black Swamp Getting Better

The Black Swamp Bird Observatory (BSBO) has rolled out its new BSBO website, www.bsbobird.org, packed with information about birds, conservation, coming events and much more.

If you're not out looking for winter birds, take a few minutes to visit the site. A few things in particular you're encouraged to take a look at are: the Ohio Winter Bird Atlas, the Ohio Young Birders Club, and the coming events calendar. BSBO has some great things in store for birders.

BSBO Education Director Kim Kaufman says a huge thank you goes out to Web Design Engineer, Delores Cole (who also president of the Kirtland Bird Club), for making BSBO's dream a reality.

Strike One, Yer Out!

Window strikes are a fact of nature. Well, not exactly. All of us with bird feeders probably exacerbate the problem. There are ways to alleviate the serious issue of birds hitting our windows. Here's some guidance from Casey Tucker of Audubon Ohio.

Window collisions are roughly estimated to kill 100 million to 1 billion birds each year. They are considered a leading source

of mortality among birds. Fortunately, there are some rather easy actions each of us can take to help reduce bird mortality and protect the birds visiting our homes and communities.

This is the time of year when many people begin to put up their bird-feeders. Placement of feeders can be critical for helping reduce window collisions by birds. Feeders should be placed either near a window (less than three to five feet) or further away from a window (greater than 15 to 30 feet). The idea being that birds feeding close to a window won't have enough time to build up momentum to hurt themselves if they collide, and birds feeding farther away can react and have other places to go if they're spooked off the feeder.

Window screens can also help reduce collisions by creating a trampoline effect whereby a bird bounces safely off of the screen. There are professionally made screens that can be purchased and fitted to a window. Something as simple as fruit-tree netting can be stretched across a window, leaving space between the netting and glass to allow the birds to bounce, that provide a cost-effective solution.

Placement of trees and bushes can also be helpful in reducing collisions. Trees that shade or block windows can reduce the reflective properties of windows. This can also be achieved by staking used Christmas trees in front of or near windows during the peak of bird-feeding activity. Trees and bushes also provide quick cover birds can dash into to escape predators, like hawks or feral cats. Placing them near feeders will encourage birds to make quick, short-distance sprints to cover rather than long-distance bursts. Trees and bushes also serve as a source of shelter against inclement weather conditions.

There are a variety of other ways to reduce bird collisions around the house. Please feel free to share your ideas and tips for how you keep your birds safe with Casey at ctucker@audubon.org.

Cold Weather Getaway

Voyage into one of the more mysterious areas of the world, the Mighty Amazon, March 8-18, escorted by Audubon Ohio's Heather Starck, director of the future Columbus Audubon Center, along with a team of expert naturalists. Navigate through the Amazon's intricate network of rivers, lakes and tributaries aboard the all-suite Corinthian II.

Along the river and in the surrounding rain forest, 15,000 known animal species make their homes, including 8,600 birds, 1,800 butterflies, and more than 1,200 fish. Disembark for treks through the jungle, and delve into the Amazon's narrow channels on Zodiac landing crafts. Visit isolated river villages where villagers paddle out in canoes to greet the ship, and experience the details of Amazon river life that many visitors miss.

There is no better way to enjoy this expedition than aboard Corinthian II; its spacious accommodations, elegant dining room, beautiful lounge and relaxing sun deck create an ideal cocoon of comfort to return to after excursions ashore.

Call Audubon today at 800-967-7425 or 212-979-3066 to hold your reservation on this journey to the wild, the remote, and the mysterious Mighty Amazon.