



GREATER AKRON

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Witt's End

Winter Wonders – by Clyde Witt, editor

If a visitor from another planet witnessed all the groaning I hear about winter, it would think there's nothing much good about this special season. Not so. There's plenty to be happy about. Some folks might consider it the nadir of the birding season. I reserve that for July and August. Since I attended the Ohio Ornithological Society's symposium on shorebirds, however, I'm beginning to think differently about those dull summer months.

Winter is a great time for seeing birds of the far north we might not otherwise encounter. And the chance to stand on the shores of Lake Erie trying to sort out the look-alike gulls when the temperature is minus-whatever and your skin is freezing to your bones ... Nothing like it!

And another thing I like about winter is a little known, yet greatly appreciated, fact: On January 2, when Earth reached its closest point to the sun (91,401,587 miles, give or take) we also reached our fastest orbital speed. That speed makes winter the shortest season of the year!

There's plenty to do this winter, but you have to hurry. It's a short season, after all. Take a look at some of the field trips Marc Nolls has set up for us. And get down to Lake Erie before global warming takes all the fun out of those near-death searches for scoters and jaegers.

Meetings

The chapter holds meetings on the fourth Tuesday of the month, except for December when we do the Christmas Count. June is our annual picnic so the meeting place is not always the same. There are no meetings in July and August. 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 and east of the Shady Hollow Pavilion. Check MetroParks Maps at www.summitmetroparks.org for a map of Sand Run Park. The 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 so bring a friend. Refreshments are served by our stellar hospitality committee.

We're going to start 2008 by thinking warm and really warm. Our **January 22** meeting will feature chapter member Larry Roche. If you'll recall a couple years back, Larry did a program for us shortly after the release of his book on Dragonflies and Damselflies. Now he's back with an updated version of that book, and more. It might be a while before we see any dragonflies, however, it's never too early to study the field guide and learn some tips on identification.

February 26 Susan Jones and Clyde Witt will share their experiences in the jungles of Trinidad and Tobago; one country with two names, two cultures and more than 400 species of birds. Learn about the Asa Wright Nature Center and places not on the map.

Hug a Hunter Today

While fishing and hunting might not be the way you'd handle natural resources, the hook and bullet crowd brings a lot of money to state coffers that protect the land we bird on—usually for free. Here are some numbers I recently saw.

Nationally, Texas is at the top of the pack. It is No. 1 in total hunters and anglers (2.6 million), money spent (\$6.6 billion), jobs supported (106,000) and tax revenue generated (\$1.3 billion). Florida nets the No. 2 spot.

When you compare spending by hunters and anglers to other sectors, their impact on a state's economy becomes more tangible. Here are a few highlights:

“Spending by sportsmen benefits not only the manufacturers of hunting and fishing related products, but everything from local mom and pop businesses to wildlife conservation,” says Doug Painter, president of National Shooting Sports Foundation. “And because most hunting and fishing takes place in rural areas, much of the spending benefits less affluent parts of the state.”

On the national level, 34 million sportsmen age 16 and older spent more than \$76 billion in 2006, supporting 1.6 million jobs. If a single corporation grossed as much as hunters and anglers spend, it would be among America's 20 largest, ahead of Target, Costco and AT&T.

Ohio ranks number four in number of anglers and eighth in resident hunters. In total spending we rank ninth with \$1.9 billion.

Friends of the Newsletter Fund

Our plea in September for funds to help the Newsletter has generated nearly enough for one issue, close to \$700-- and plenty of advice. All suggestions are welcome and some, from professional printers within our organizations as well as from other Audubon Chapters, are being considered. If you'd like to help, here's all you have to do: Mail a check for \$5, payable to Greater Akron Audubon Society (with Newsletter Fund in the memo section) to GAAS, P.O. Box 80056, Akron, OH 44308. Simpler for you, bring that check to any of our dynamic meetings this year, hand it to one of the officers and tell him or her what you think of the job we're doing. Thanks.

Field Trips

We're going laugh at the winter weather and get out to see some birds this year. Field Trip Chairman Marc Nolls has lined up a couple good ones for us. On **January 26** we'll meet with the folks from Western Cuyahoga Audubon for a joint field trip of the Horseshoe Pond and Tree Farm areas of CVNP. There are plenty of winter residents and visitors tucked into those pine and fir trees at this time of the year. We'll start about 8 a.m. from the Horseshoe Pond parking area on Major Road, and hike about three miles, so be prepared.

On **February 17** we have a great trip scheduled at Killdeer Plains Wildlife Area in the west central part of the state near Upper Sandusky. Our group leader will be Jim McCormac, president of the Ohio Ornithological Society. We'll be sharing this event with members of the Greater Mohican Audubon Society. We have special permission to use the Sportsmen's Center so plan to bring some food to share with others. Precise starting times have not been determined. Come to the January meeting and watch the Web site (www.akronaudubon.org) for details. At this time of the year, Killdeer Plains is the place to be for owls, Horned Larks, Northern Harriers, Snow Buntings and so much more. It can also be bitterly cold so be prepared.

Important Bird Areas

Important for Audubon Chapters

[This article was submitted by Audubon Ohio News by Kelly Brown, development associate.]

The Important Bird Area (IBA) program is the centerpiece of Audubon Ohio's bird conservation work. Most threats to bird populations are habitat-based and Audubon Ohio is working on habitat relief through all of its programs areas- policy, education and science, including the IBA program.

IBAs provide essential habitat for one or more species of birds and include sites that birds use during their nesting season, during the winter and/or while they are migrating. Usually these sites stand out as special from the surrounding landscape

The National Audubon Society's *2007 WatchList-2007*, the newest and most scientifically sound list of America's birds at greatest risk, has identified 14 Ohio birds at risk for extinction. Thus, providing habitat relief for Ohio IBAs has

become crucial.

With help from numerous volunteers and BirdLife International, 64 IBAs have been identified in Ohio using the following criteria:

- Places where rare species of birds are found.
- Places with rare natural habitats with birds that are only found in these special habitats.
- Places where large numbers of birds are found.
- Places that have been important for a long time for the study of birds.

Audubon Ohio is presently prioritizing our 64 Important Bird Areas in Ohio to determine which are so significant as to qualify for global or continental status. (The most likely candidates are the Western Basin of Lake Erie and the Wayne National Forest). If an IBA qualifies for global or continental status it will receive substantial attention from our national organization. In the meantime, we have several projects already under way to monitor bird life and protect critical habitats in various IBAs, including the Rocky River in Cleveland, the Scioto-Greenlawn area in Columbus, and the Voice of America grassland near Cincinnati.

The IBA Program continues to be successful because it identifies priority sites for birds in a global context. It includes all birds and all bird habitats, and it promotes constituency building focused on stewardship and conservation delivery.

If you want to support Audubon Ohio's efforts to protect and enhance Ohio's Important Bird Areas, click here to donate by credit card now! ! If you prefer, checks or money orders can be sent to: Christie Vargo/ Audubon Ohio/ 692 North High Street, Suite 303, Columbus, Ohio 43215

Breeding Bird Atlas

The Cleveland Museum of Natural History and the Kirtland Bird Club have joined to enter summer bird sightings into the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas Web site:

<http://www.ohiobirds.org/obba2/>

If you are curious about atlasing, already own a block, or just enjoy learning about Ohio's nesting birds your welcome to attending the group's meetings. If your having trouble locating block numbers the group has multiple preprinted maps available.

Anyone with summer birding checklists already has valuable Atlas data. Attend a Data Get Together and they'll enter your sightings into the online database.

The group meets from 5 p.m-8 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month (except November and December) in the Cleveland Museum of Natural History library, free with museum admission.

Nesting note topics presentations will begin at 6:30 p.m.

January 16	What is the OBB Atlas	Aaron Boone
February 20	Woodpeckers	Tom Leiden
March 19	Birding techniques for atlasers	Andy Jones
April 16	Virginia Rail	Lisa Chapman
May 21	Chimney Swifts	Jean Hoffman

Watchlist Raises Alarms About Ohio Birds

[This article was submitted by Audubon Ohio Education Specialist Casey Tucker]

Many of the 178 bird species that Audubon and the American Bird Conservancy (ABC) say need top-priority conservation attention to ensure their continued survival spend at least part of their year in Ohio. They have the dubious distinction of being included on *WatchList 2007*, the newest and most scientifically sound list of America's birds at greatest risk.

Unlike those on Audubon's recent survey of *Common Birds in Decline*, these species are often rare and limited in range. Consequently, they face a greater possibility of disappearing from the state. For many of them, conservation efforts in Ohio as well as nationally will play a critical role in determining their future health and survival.

The continental *WatchList* is based on a comprehensive analysis of population size and trends, distribution, and environmental threats, informed and improved by extensive scientific review. The three species on Ohio's "red list" are those of greatest concern, while the additional 11 merit "yellow list" status due to a combination of rarity and/or a declining population. Species found on either part of the *WatchList* demand immediate help while there is still time to save them.

The five Priority *WatchList* species found in Ohio are:

Henslow's Sparrow -Loss of grassland breeding habitats through succession, changing agricultural practices, and urbanization have contributed greatly to the 85% state decline of this species over the past 40 years. With an estimated population of only 6,000 birds in Ohio, restoration and protection of appropriate grassland habitats will be essential.

Prothonotary Warbler -The loss of wetlands and channelization of streams and rivers in Ohio has probably contributed greatly to the status of this charismatic species of swamp forests and riparian corridors. Partners in Flight has estimated Ohio's population to consist of approximately 300 individuals, though several nest box initiatives in the state have increased local abundance in several Important Bird Areas.

Red-headed Woodpecker -Once abundant in Ohio's oak-hickory forests and woodlots, this species has declined 78%, to an estimated population of 35,000 birds. Competition for nest-cavities with non-native invasive species, and habitat loss due to urbanization and changing agricultural practices may have contributed towards the species' decline.

Prairie Warbler -Urbanization and succession are major factors contributing to the loss of shrub-scrub habitat for this species. They have declined by as much as 54% in Ohio over the past 40 years to an estimated population level today of 51,000 individuals. Long-term management of old fields as shrub-scrub habitats is needed to prevent further declines of this species.

Cerulean Warbler -In spite of habitat acquisition efforts and regenerating forestland in Ohio, this bird of mature deciduous hardwood forests has declined by 80% over the last 40 years to an estimated population level of 70,000 indi-

viduals in Ohio. The decline of this species may be due to a number of different factors including habitat fragmentation, loss of wintering and stopover habitats, and loss of diversity in mature forest canopies.

The new Audubon/ABC *WatchList* is based on the latest available data from the Christmas Bird Count and the annual Breeding Bird Survey along with other research and assessment from the bird conservation community. The data were analyzed and weighted according to methods developed through extensive peer review and revision, yielding an improved assessment of actual peril that can be used to determine bird conservation priorities and funding. Unlike those on Audubon's recent survey of *Common Birds in Decline*, these species are often rare and limited in range.

The *WatchList* message is clear: we must harness the energy of individuals and groups to work together to protect birds, their habitats, and other wildlife for the enjoyment and benefit of ourselves and our children.

For the complete *WatchList*, and information on how to help, visit www.audubon.org. To learn more about Audubon Ohio's work protecting these and other species, visit www.audubonohio.org.

Male Osprey Not Heard From

If you want to see how cool new technology can be, check out the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Web site, www.dnr.state.oh, and click on research and surveys. The state has been tracking a tagged male Osprey. There are maps showing the birds journey all the way to South America, along with great photos before the local fella packed his bags and headed out of this weather. There is some concern that he has not checked in with the state for a while. Well, that's what happens with kids on winter breaks.

Migration south 2007 - The male osprey departed from his nest site at Alum Creek Reservoir and began his migration south sometime between September 14th and 17th. Satellite radar detected a transmitter signal as he crossed from Florida to Cuba on September 20th around 10:00pm, and again as he landed in Cuba at 1:00 am on September 21. The male reached Colombia on September 26 and Venezuela on September 27.

October 26 update - For the last 2 weeks, the osprey has remained in Brazil about 200 miles north of the group of Amazon River islands where he over-wintered for the last 2 years. He is located near the town of Sao Gabriel da Cachoeira. We are not getting very accurate locations from his transmitter. This could be from insufficient sunlight recharging the transmitter's solar batteries or something that is partially obscuring the solar panel. The transmitter signals are infrequent which is also an indication of low battery power. There is no mortality switch on the transmitter, so we do not know if the male is dead or alive. It does seem a bit strange that the osprey is hanging so close to an urban area when he has never been located in an area like that before. We should know in the coming weeks whether the osprey is alive and well, or possibly laying on the jungle floor which would account for insufficient sunlight recharging the batteries.