



GREATER AKRON AUDUBON *Matters*

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My Witt's End — by *Clyde Witt, editor*

Spring Training: It's How You Play the Rest of the Year

Susan and I were fortunate to have a preview of spring-to-come, this year. Along with local birders Ann and Dwight Chasar—and 10 others from various parts of the U.S., we participated in a research birding study in Cuba in early March.

We spent two weeks birding where few other Americans have gone. We saw endemic species missing from the lifelists of some of the best names in birding.



Along with exciting birds such as the Cuban Tody, Cuban Trogon and Fernandina's Flicker, we saw a good measure of "our" birds. Those warblers we think of as our birds because they pass through this area in particular, on their trip to breeding grounds in Canada.

As exciting as the Cuban specialties were, the sight of a Black-throated Blue Warbler—and many others—still gave us a jolt of adrenaline. We're ready for warbler season this year—bring 'em on!

Programs Aplenty

Editor's Note: Because of chapter budgetary concerns, rather than reduce the already over-taxed Newsletter staff, the executive committee has opted to print only four Newsletters this season. Hang on to this one. You'll receive the next issue in early September. For an up-to-the-minute schedule attend the meetings, stay tuned—and keep your eye on the chapter's Web site, www.akronaudubon.org.

Program Schedule

The chapter holds meetings on the fourth Tuesday of the month, except for December when we do the Audubon 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.summit-metroparks.org for a map of Sand Run Park. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. The meeting starts promptly at 7:00 p.m. We usually begin with a short, informative, business session. Meetings are open to the public so bring a friend. The June meeting, our annual picnic, will be held at Bath Nature Preserve.

April 27 This month our featured speaker will be special guest James Cole, Bird Conservation Manager for The Nature Conservancy of Ohio. He will give us an important presentation on what the Nature Conservancy is doing to protect birding areas, local and international. Conserving important stopover locations for migrant birds in Western Lake Erie will be his primary focus. Cole works from the Kitty Todd Nature Preserve in northwest Ohio as TNC's migratory bird specialist for the state. His current focus is on preserving coastal wetland and uplands in Western Lake Erie for migratory birds. Prior to moving to the Toledo area last year, Cole served as National Audubon Society's Director of Bird Conservation for Indiana.

May 25 Dr. Gary Riggs, a veterinarian who does work for the Akron Zoo and Ohio Department of Natural Resources is a speaker not to be missed. If you were at the September presentation about Peregrine Falcons, given by Damon Greer, you'll remember the praise heaped upon Gary for work he's done with that species. Now we'll have an inside look at the work of a wildlife vet. He also has his own charitable organization, Wild4Ever. Check it out at www.wild4ever.com, which will give you a great preview of our program. Wild4Ever is involved with projects such as Venezuelan waterfowl, sun bears, jaguars, fauna of Madagascar and Cambodian wildlife.

June 22 The Annual Picnic. We'll be returning to the **Bath Nature Preserve** this year. Along with a great potluck dinner, we'll serve up a special program, the speaker of which is yet to be determined. Once again, the chapter will provide the necessary soft drink beverages. We ask that you bring a potluck dish to share and your own plates and flatware. If time permits we'll do some quick walks around the property looking for Bobolinks and Eastern Meadowlarks. If you prefer, show up early and walk the grounds.

Seen Any Eagles?

I'm pleased to report the Bald Eagles are on the nest in the heron rookery, north of Station Road on the west side of the Cuyahoga River. In 2006 eagles built a nest in the Pinery Narrows area, the first recorded in Cuyahoga County in more than 70 years.

That nest was unsuccessful. Eagles returned to build another nest nearby the following year. In 2007, the pair successfully raised one eaglet, marking the official return of nesting bald eagles to the Cuyahoga Valley. They returned to the same nest in 2008 and again raised one eaglet.

In February 2009, the eagle pair returned once again and began adding sticks to the same nest used in 2007 and 2008. Unfortunately, the nest fell during a high windstorm in early February. There were no eggs in the nest. The pair remained in the area and began to rebuild their nest nearby, in a new tree.

The female began incubating egg(s) around February 28. Eggs incubate for 35 days. Eagle eggs and young are extremely sensitive to cold temperatures so adults must remain on the nest constantly. Human disturbance can disrupt this constant care, jeopardizing nesting success. Park staff took care to direct foot and water traffic away from the nesting area. It asked visitors to honor the closures so the birds could have another successful breeding year.

The area along the railroad tracks is closed. The park service is also discouraging viewing from the east of the river, however, the Tow Path Trail is open.

The Secret Life of Birdfeeders

Thanks to Web Guru Wolfgang Pelz for the lead to this fascinating story about bird feeders, feeding and those of us who participate. For the full story, visit the following Web site: <http://www.utne.com/GreatWriting/The-Secret-Life-of-Birdfeeders.aspx>.

The birdfeeder industrial complex is raking in cash, inviting controversy, and may be changing the genetic structure of bird populations. Writing for *The Smart Set*, Jesse Smith pecks at the multi-billion-dollar bird-feeding industry and finds rampant consumerism, scientific data fights, and a hobby that is altering the course of life itself. According to research cited by Smith, the predominance of bird feeders in England

has shifted migratory patterns for some Central European blackcaps, causing some of the birds to stay in England for the winter and others to venture on to Spain. The different groups are already showing genetic adaptations suited to the two different climates, and could lead the birds to split into two separate species.

Making Bequests

Recently, we were asked how people can make bequests to the chapter, or donations in the name of loved ones. The simplest way is for checks to be sent to Greater Akron Audubon Society, in care of our Post Office Box 80056, Akron, Ohio 44308. The chapter will acknowledge all gifts.

Exploring the BNP

Greg Smith, manager of the University of Akron biology field station at Bath Nature Preserve, has agreed to a joint UA/GAAS bird walk at BNP on Saturday, May 8. The event will start at the main trailhead at 8am. Greg will be the primary leader—he's exceptionally knowledgeable about BNP and is a good birder. We are looking for a volunteer from GAAS to assist participants with birding as possible and distribute some GAAS propaganda, copies of latest newsletter and the BNP bird checklists. If you can help at what should be an outstanding morning of birding, please contact Mark Purdy.

Spring Bird Walks in the Area

Thanks to Marc Nolls, here's a list of spring bird walks throughout the area, primarily in Cleveland Metro Parks. These events are not sponsored by our chapter, however, that are all in excellent parts of surrounding counties—and all have outstanding leaders.

The Sunday morning walks are led by expert volunteers and are free. The walks start at 7:30 a.m. beginning April 25 and continue each Sunday through May 16.

- Brecksville, parking area at Station Rd. Bridge Trailhead. Entrance is on Riverview Rd., just south of Route 82.
- Hinckley, meet at the bridge on Medina Rt. 44, south end of Hinckley Lake.
- Bedford, meet at the Hemlock Creek picnic area, off Button Road in Bedford.
- Ohio & Erie Canal Center, in the parking lot off E. 49th Street, south of Grant Avenue, Cuyahoga Heights.
- Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland will hold walks at its Aurora Sanctuary, parking lot east of Page Rd. on Pioneer Trail, Aurora. Also, the Blanche Novak Sanctuary, parking lot eight miles north of Route 82 on Town Line Road, Aurora.
- Portage County, the James H. Barrow Field Station, Wheeler Road in Hiram.

For maps and directions to any of the above locations, visit the Web site of our friends at the Western Cuyahoga Audubon

Things Go Bump in the Night

Harvey Webster, Director of Wildlife Resources at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, has initiated an interesting and beneficial program that is taking hold in Cleveland and many cities in our country. Here is Webster's outline of the effort, called "Smart Light-Safe Flight Ohio." It's being termed the partnership to conserve migratory birds and energy in downtown Cleveland and urban centers throughout Ohio.



**Cleveland Museum of
NATURAL HISTORY**

Smart Light-Safe Flight Ohio—the program to conserve migratory birds and energy in urban centers—seeks to enlist owners and managers of tall buildings, particularly downtown skyscrapers, to turn off or significantly dim their lights after 11:30 pm during the height of spring and fall bird migration. This would run from mid-March to mid-June and again from mid-August to mid-November. The result would be a significant reduction in energy use and bird collisions. Participating buildings will save energy, money and can project an environmentally friendly public image.

We know that during the spring and fall migratory seasons, large numbers of birds come through the region, often flying at night. Under certain environmental conditions, typically with a low cloud ceiling or fog, the birds are inextricably drawn to the lighted buildings where they either collide with the building or circle the building until exhausted. The toll that a single building can take can be staggering. 679 birds were salvaged from the sidewalks around one building on Public Square in 2005 alone! The problem is real and represents a needless loss of these migrant birds.

The threat is most extreme on nights where there is a low cloud ceiling or foggy conditions. By monitoring atmospheric conditions, building owners, operators and tenants could turn off the lights on those nights when the threat is greatest. However for a variety of business, cleaning, safety or organizational reasons, this is not practical. So we are proposing a different approach.

By turning off the lights of tall buildings from 11:30 pm to 5:00 am in the migratory seasons, March 15 through June 15 and August 15 through November 15, the threat to the birds is greatly diminished.

What we envision is a win-win opportunity for building owners and bird conservation. By participating in the Smart Light/Safe Flight program and turning the lights out during these times, building owners and managers would save energy and simultaneously save birds from the hazards that the buildings pose. The building owners and managers project a green and sustainable image and save money!

We also recognize that there will be times where the buildings need to be lit for publicity and marketing purposes (i.e. NBA finals or other times where downtown Cleveland is

the centerpiece of regional or national media attention). The idea is to reduce the threat by turning the lights out when and where possible.

Smart Light/Safe Flight Ohio will create and provide resources and materials so that the building owners and managers can actively publicize their environmental image. The partnership will provide educational materials and programming on bird migration for the benefit of building tenants. The partnership will create and maintain a web-site where building owners will be recognized for their participation in this endeavor in sustainability.

Similar programs are being done in Chicago, Milwaukee, Indianapolis and New York under the banner Lights Out. Though we embrace the concept adopted by those cities, we have heard from several quarters that that term 'Lights out' has negative connotations for a rust belt city with a declining manufacturing base. Hence the name Smart Light-Safe Flight Ohio.

Beyond nighttime illumination of buildings, there are many other hazards posed by man-made structures to migratory birds - collisions with windows, communications towers, and wind turbines. We aim to be a regional resource for information on mitigating the threats posed by those structures.

We are keen on getting this program established in 2010. The Cleveland Museum of Natural History is seeking corporate and conservation partners to join the collaborative and provide a network for its regional implementation.

Contact Harvey at 216-231-4600 ext 3290 or at hwebster@cmnh.org.

Nesting Bird Census Needs Volunteers

So many birds and so little time! Especially in May—so many walks and talks. Got that post-May let-down? Bird life is not over. Join us for the annual GAAS June bird census. This year's dates are not nailed down, however, it will be during a 10-day period in mid-June—count on it.

The span of ten days gives everyone a chance to work around a busy schedule and between the rain drops. Volunteers count the birds both seen and heard within that time frame in an assigned area of Summit County. We always need more volunteers. This is a great way to sharpen your birding skills, check out new areas of the county, and just get outside. And if you are relatively new to birding let us help you. If you can't join us, but you hear woodcocks, nighthawks or owls during those dates, we'd love to know about it. Please call us.

We've been doing this census for 32 years. And now every bird counted is on our Web site. Check out what we did during all those years at www.akronaudubon.org.

Contact Doug Vogus at 330-865-6706 (email vogeye@yahoo.com) or Ann Chasar at 330-467-3664 (email ascdwc43@yahoo.com) for more information. If you helped out last year we will contact you.