



GREATER AKRON AUDUBON *Matters*

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

One Week Does Not a Researcher Make

Being a member of groups such as Greater Akron Audubon Society enables you to participate in various aspects of citizen science; to add to the greater body of knowledge, be it things like the Christmas Count, Nesting Bird Census, etc. A year ago, Susan and I worked on Project Puffin in Maine. I've written about our adventures and working with Dr. Steve Kress and others from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, involved in restoring Atlantic Puffin nesting sites to the islands off the coast.

As with many projects, in the end, you wonder if your efforts have any payback. Of course, just participating is a learning experience and payback enough. But you wonder, did it do any good?

Well, I'm pleased to report a partial payback, or, I should say, continuing payback, on Project Puffin. One of the things we discussed late into those chilly evenings last May and June on Hog Island was whether radio telemetry could/would prove worthy for pelagic species such as the Atlantic Puffin. Now, a year later, the answer is a gratifying, yes!

Like many seabirds, little has been known about the lives of puffins when they are not in their island nesting colonies. Because the birds travel far from land, observations of their whereabouts are limited. In 2009, National Audubon Society researchers attached tracking devices to the leg bands of eight puffins at their summer nesting site, Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge, a 65-acre treeless island located 21 miles off the coast of Rockland, Maine. Last June they recovered the devices from two puffins—and learned that while there was some overlap in the winter home, one of the two seafaring birds ranged from the icy waters of the northern Labrador Sea to warmer waters near Bermuda.

"I've spent decades helping to restore puffins to their nesting colonies in Maine," said Dr. Steve Kress, vice

president for Bird Conservation for the National Audubon Society. "It's an amazing moment for all of us who work with these birds to have a glimpse into where they go after they leave the islands."

Puffins, which can live more than 30 years, return each year to the island where they nested. They usually appear in early spring and each pair lays their single egg in a deep rock crevice. After the egg hatches, parents tend the chick

for six weeks. The chicks head off to sea in July, and their parents typically follow within the next few weeks, spending the next eight months of the year living an oceanic life. Although puffins are occasionally seen at sea in the winter, nothing was known about the specific movements of individual Maine birds, until now.

The first Maine puffin ever tracked spent October through December in the outer Gulf of Maine, moving

northward along the continental shelf of Nova Scotia on his way to the Gulf of St. Lawrence where he spent most of January, before heading south to the far offshore waters of the Mid-Atlantic States, nearly to Bermuda. By May, he had returned to Seal Island, where he was captured on June 23, 2011. His eight-month journey covered a remarkable round trip distance of about 4,800 miles.

As seabird habitats are increasingly threatened by climate change, fisheries, off-shore drilling and wind farms, it is becoming increasingly important to discover migratory patterns to better safeguard the birds at both their nesting and winter homes.

So, when the call goes out this spring to help with our long-running nesting bird census, please join in. You never know.

Meetings for April, May and June

The chapter holds its meetings the fourth Tuesday of the month, except December when we do the Annual 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 directions to Sand Run Park. Doors open at 6:30 and the meeting starts promptly at 7:00. We usually begin with a short business session before the main program. Meetings are open to the public so bring a friend.



April 24: “What’s that I hear?” is heard second only to “What does the (fill in the blank) warbler say?” at this time of the year. A larger and potentially more meaningful question might be, “What are the birds communicating with their vocalizations?” This month we’ll get some answers to those seemingly impossible questions. Jay Mager, Ohio Northern University, will present our program, “Acoustic Communication in Birds.” You’ll have to attend to see what I’m saying.

May 22: Jamey Graham, wildlife communications specialist, ODNR, Division of Wildlife, will tell us not all is doom and gloom on the conservation front. “Comeback Critters and the Conservation Movement,” will focus on wildlife management techniques and how species have recovered, thanks to reintroduction efforts.

Jun 26: All that glitters is not gold. It could be the head of a Mallard Duck. The annual picnic will again be held at Bath Nature Preserve. Our speaker will be Matthew Shawkey of University of Akron, a specialist in the “Iridescence of Mallard Feathers.” Here’s your chance to learn that beauty really is more than skin deep. In keeping with tradition, the chapter will provide the necessary soft drink beverages. We ask that you bring a potluck dish to share, along with your own plates and flatware. If time permits we’ll organize some quick walks around the property looking for Bobolinks, Red-headed Woodpeckers and Eastern Meadowlarks. If you prefer, show up early and walk the grounds of this premiere birding spot on your own. For specifics on starting time, etc., attend the monthly meetings or check the Web site, www.akronaudubon.org.

Lights, Camera, Action! Follow the Money

Okay, migration has started and folks who’ve not taken a picture for months are preparing to immortalize every warbler that passes through the area. If you don’t believe me, make a visit to Magee Marsh any day of the week in the month of May.

Along with the action it’s a good time to remember to turn off the lights—or tell your companies or local political

officials to turn off or tone-down lighting on buildings. Last summer, towns and cities in Maine and Illinois began removing some streetlights as part of a budget-cutting measure.

Wilton, Maine, removed 103 of its 314 streetlights in July, anticipating a savings of almost \$20,000 a year, the Daily Bulldog of Franklin County reported. In Rockford, Ill., a city of 150,000, about 2,400 streetlights have been removed, for a savings of about \$500,000 from the city’s street lighting bill of \$2.7 million.

Reducing lighting obviously cuts energy usage, but there are other benefits as well. Light-pollution experts say that many cities are over lit. And that some lighting can cause corresponding dark shadows, actually making a place more dangerous by offering hiding places. Or creating the need for more lighting to get rid of the shadows.

No matter what level of lighting a municipality determines it needs, one way to help with costs, energy usage and pollution control is to make sure light is used most efficiently. That means using efficient light bulbs, or even solar-powered lighting where feasible.

Field Trips for Migrating Species

If you’re trying to avoid the crowds at Magee Marsh, yet still want to see some migrating warblers, Bath Nature Preserve (BNP) is one of the better-kept secrets in this area. In cooperation with experts from the University of Akron Biology Department, we’ll have a walk, beginning at 8 a.m., **May 12**, at BNP. Our leader will be Dr. Greg Smith, manager of the bio field station at BNP. All levels of birding skill are welcome. BNP is one of the rare spots in this area to see Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark. Meet in the main parking lot.

Another special field trip is scheduled for **June 23**, 8 a.m., BNP, however, participants in this trip will be transported via vans to the Panzner Wetland Wildlife Reserve in nearby Copley. Because of limited parking and strict regulations at the wildlife reserve, vans are the only way we can accommodate a large group. This is a special opportunity to see this gem. Our leader(s) will be either Dr. Greg Smith or Dr. Randy Mitchell, or both, members of the UA Biology Department.

OBBA II Species Sponsorship

Now that the good folks at the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II project have accumulated tons of data, they’re working even harder to accumulate some cash to produce that data in book form.

Here’s your chance to help. Sponsor your favorite bird and be recognized, by name, in the Ohio Breeding Bird Atlas II book. This species sponsorship program was created to help generate funds that will lower the price of the published book. Fieldwork for OBBA II was conducted between 2006 and 2011. You can get more information on OBBA II by

visiting the main Web site, www.ohiobirds.org/obba2/.

Your name will be printed at the bottom of the first page of the species account. Check out what a species account will look like and see where your name could go: www.ohiobirds.org/obba2/wordpress/?page_id=4.

The species sponsorship is in the form of an auction, with bids starting at \$50, *cheep* for a lifetime of fame and admiration from your fellow birders. Navigate through the auction at www.ohiobirds.org/obba2/wordpress/?page_id=72. Winners of each auction will be credited by name as the species' sponsor. Names can be in the form of an individual, group, or in memoriam. Restrictions apply.

Hanging Out the Help Wanted Sign

by Ann Chasar

Fact or Fiction? The Greater Akron Audubon Society Breeding Bird Census is 35 years old? FACT: This is the 35th year for this on-going citizen science project. Now that the statewide breeding bird survey is finished and birders are still lusting to list, we are here to fill the void. This year the census dates are June 15th through June 24th.

The span of 10 days gives everyone a chance to work around busy schedules and between raindrops. Volunteers count birds both seen and heard within the given time frame in an assigned area of Summit County. We always need more volunteers, so come join us. All you sharp young birders, that means you, too! This is a great way to use your birding skills, check out new areas of the county, and just get outside. If you can't join us, but hear woodcocks, nighthawks or owls during those dates, we'd love to know about it. Have an active hawk nest or resident owl calling in your neighborhood during the June 15-24th dates? --Let us know!

If you are wondering what birds are possible, check us out at www.akronaudubon.org where 34 years of this count are summarized. Contact Doug Vogus at (330) 352-2355 (email vogey@yaho.com) or Ann Chasar at (330) 467-3664 (email ascdwc43@yahoo.com) if you would like more information. Those who participated last year will be contacted again.

Coming of Age—Technologically Speaking

Those of us who enjoyed (make that, lusted after) the iconic 1960 film, "Where the Boys Are," are singing a different tune these days. It's similar, though; Where the Birds Are. Thankfully our good friends at eBird and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology have a slick addition to its Web site with up-to-the-minute migration information and predictions of which species will be going where and when.

Log on to eBird, www.eBird.org, (no beach blanket

required) and check the dates. The information is from current radar sites around the country.

Click on the headline in the most-current migration story and the page opens to reveal in-depth regional data, great if you're not planning to be one of the billions of people heading to Magee Marsh in May. There's also an easy-to-understand primer on how to read radar screens. Ornithologists factor in weather and current eBird listings to come up with their predictions of which species are on the move.

Who needs Yvette Mimieux or George Hamilton when you have radar screens showing you where the Chestnut-sided Warblers are?

New National Parks Field Guide

The reason they're called smart phones is because they know a good deal when they see one—and this app is a good deal; it's free. The National Parks Field Guides app has all the information you could hope for as it relates to 50 popular national parks. This interactive field guide to the wildlife includes all the birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians you'll encounter while visiting a park, as well as help with identifying native trees and wildflowers. Created for the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), the guide is also full of useful information about each park such as major sites within it, directions, hours and fees, and links and phone numbers to make reservations or get more information.

The NPCA National Parks Field Guides will help you do all sorts of things — find out what species of bird you just saw on the beach in Cape Cod, learn what grizzly bears eat for dinner in Denali, know when porcupine mating season begins in the Shenandoah, or reserve a camp site in Yosemite.

It's comprehensive — all native birds and animals are included, along with photos, in-depth descriptions, audio, field marks and more. Users can also search for endangered species or poisonous and dangerous species native to any of the 50 national parks featured.

And it's only an easy download away. This link will take you directly to the National Parks guide (www.itunes.apple.com/us/app/park-guides/id394429512?mt=8) or shop in iTunes app store for other guides such as the one for the Chesapeake Bay area. After using the app for a couple weeks I found one really serious flaw: You need a WiFi connection, or connection to a cell tower, something hard to come by when you're in most national parks. The upside is that the app is great for planning and it worked in the two visitors' centers where I tried it. Cool stuff that brings a whole new meaning to armchair travel.

