



# GREATER AKRON AUDUBON *Matters*

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

### *An Early Christmas Gift*

If last month's early warning signs weren't enough to drive you to your nearest computer store, here's another sign of the times. First, the good news: The annual (nagging) fee for participation in the Audubon Annual Christmas Bird Count is history. National Audubon (in its wisdom) has opted to end the charge. The not-so-good news for non-computer types, the compilation of the data from around the world will only be available online. The print copy (American Birds) we all received about a year after count day will no longer be issued.

Okay, I have to admit I'm a bit sorry to see the special issue go away. It was fun to leaf through and see the lists of birds and locations. I realize the time has come to move forward; it's the right thing to do. The printed copy of the data was of small value to most participants. A new, interactive form of the data will allow us to quickly move through the reams of information to find how many Common Ravens were seen at Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, or which chapter in the country (often Santa Barbara, California), had the most species.

## **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](http://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.

**October 23rd:** Ever wondered how geckos are able to climb walls and cross ceilings, never missing a step or falling? And even if we did know how they did it, what good would it do? Come to the October meeting and get the answers to these and other questions about the fascinating lives of

geckos. Our speaker will be Dr. Ali Dhinojwala, Department of Polymer Science, University of Akron, "Learning from Geckos to Climb Walls."

**November 27:** We're all aware of the glaciers that passed over Ohio eons ago. With all the concern about climate change, what can we expect in the future? Dr. John Szabo, Department of Geology & Environmental Science, University of Akron, will talk with us about how glaciers shaped our past and what they might mean for our future.

**December 16:** Will be the annual National Audubon Christmas Bird Count. This will be in lieu of our regular meeting. We'll also have our free chili dinner at the Mingo Shelter following the count, beginning about 5 p.m. Come to the October and November meetings to learn how you can join in on this, the longest-running citizen science project on planet Earth. Check [www.akronaudubon.org](http://www.akronaudubon.org) for up-to-the-minute information.

## **Changes in the Wind**

Thanks to Andy Jones, Ph.D., director of science, William A. and Nancy R. Klamm Endowed Chair of Ornithology and Head of Department of Ornithology at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History for this report on Ohio's endangered species. Every five years a status assessment of Ohio's fish and wildlife species is conducted. Several species have been taken off Ohio's Endangered Species List while others have been added, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources' (ODNR) Division of Wildlife.

Five species were downlisted from endangered to threatened and include the bobcat, Lake Erie watersnake, trumpeter swan, blue sucker and the mountain madtom. The yellow-bellied sapsucker was downlisted from endangered to species of concern. Those species going from threatened to special interest were dark-eyed junco, yellow-crowned night-heron, hermit thrush and least flycatcher. Osprey, bald eagle, bluebreast darter and rosieside dace were taken off the threatened list and will no longer receive a designation. All of these species have experienced tremendous range expansion due to improved habitat or water quality.

Other species that will no longer receive a designation are the blue grosbeak, little blue heron, American widgeon,

rock pocketbook, flat floater and fat pocketbook. Those species added to Ohio's endangered species list were upland sandpiper, Iowa darter and gilt darter. The Eastern harvest mouse was added to the threatened list. Species going from no designation to species of concern include smoky shrew, deer mouse, prairie vole, woodland vole, southern bog lemming, silver-haired bat, red bat and hoary bat. The evening bat, American black duck and variegated orange moth will now be listed as a species of special interest. Listed as extinct are Kramer's cave beetle and the tubercled blossom mussel, which have not been found globally in more than 100 years. Extirpated from Ohio are the spoonhead sculpin, blackchin shiner, blacknose shiner and Mississippi silvery minnow, which have not been found in the state for 25 years. One mammal, the Southern red-backed vole, has been listed as extirpated.

The Division of Wildlife has legal authority over Ohio's fish and wildlife, which includes about 56 species of mammals, 200 species of breeding birds, 84 species and subspecies of amphibians and reptiles, 170 species of fish, 100 species of mollusks and 20 species of crustaceans. In addition, there are thousands of species of insects and other invertebrates which fall under the Division of Wildlife's jurisdiction.

No state tax dollars are used to support this program. Monitoring and recovery efforts are supported by the Wildlife Diversity and Endangered Species Fund, which receives donations from Ohioans through the state income tax check-off program and by the purchase of cardinal license plates. ODNR ensures a balance between proper use and protection of our natural resources for the benefit of all. For more information, visit the ODNR website at [www.ohiodnr.com](http://www.ohiodnr.com).

## **The Buzz About Bees**

On an extended trip to California recently, Susan and I visited Pinnacles National Monument in Paltines, California. It's one of those out-of-the-way national parks protecting a unique environment. While the name, and main attraction, of the park is its monolith pinnacles of former volcanoes, another fascinating aspect of this interior California habit is that scientists have identified about 400 species of bees living in this arid climate.

If you've been trying to have one last meal *al fresco*, you've most likely been pestered by yellow jackets, often mislabeled as bees. And while yellow jackets and bees hold special places in the environmental puzzle, bees are less aggressive.

So, what's the difference? Yellow jackets are a form of paper wasp whose structures we're familiar with hanging in trees and often mistaken for owls by unknowing birders. Some species of yellow jackets build nest above ground, however, the kind we're most familiar with in our area build beneath ground, often in abandoned rodent burrows, increasing in size until late summer and early fall.

It seems that yellow jackets have a "zone of tolerance," meaning they're more of a nuisance than a threat, until you

get too close to their nest. Then, look out. These insects prefer sugar and carrion, so plan your picnic meals accordingly.

## **Help the Critters This Winter**

It's said that a clean desk is the sign of a sick mind. The same can be said for your yard. A messy yard, at least some well-placed brush piles, can aid many of nature's critters. This fall and winter don't be so quick to pick up all those sticks. The folks at eNatureBlog ([www.wild.enature.com](http://www.wild.enature.com)) tell us that Autumn is the best time of the year to create some brush piles for the birds in your backyard. Fall trimmings can be piled up in a corner or along the edge of the yard, where it will give ground-inhabiting birds additional cover against winter weather and predators.

About half the birds that we feed in our backyards spend much of their lives on the ground nesting, roosting and in search of food. Piles of brush are ideal protective cover for resident and migrating white-throated, white-crowned, and fox sparrows. Song sparrows, tree sparrows, and field sparrows all visit backyards, and should benefit from brush pile cover. Dark-eyed juncos, towhees, winter wrens, quail, pheasants, and ground doves, also spend a great deal of their lives on the ground, and seek the kind of cover in backyards that brush piles offer.

An evergreen tree that has been cut down will also make excellent cover for ground inhabiting birds when the tree is laid on its side along a fence row or in a corner of the yard. Discarded Christmas trees give the same kind of cover. Even piles of rocks and logs will furnish some cover for birds during cold weather or when there is a threat from predators.

## **Young Birders Wanted**

From Bill Thompson III, editor, Bird Watcher's Digest, comes these seven tips on how to get more young people involved in birding.

1. Help them link up with the young birding community. A resource-rich site, sponsored by Leica Sport Optics, the microsite address is <http://yb.birdwatchersdigest.com>.
2. Give them their first field guide. It can be an old one you're finished with, or a new guide designed for young readers.
3. Give them a simple, easy-to-use bird feeder.
4. Get them gear that is the right size for them. Smaller field bags and six or seven-power binoculars with a wider field of view makes life easier.
5. Make it fun. It can seem intimidating, even for adults, so forget about leg color of Semi-palmated Sandpipers and work on shapes.
6. Give them accessible, handy booklets. There's a lot of free literature available from the state and organizations such as ours, especially for new birders.
7. Maybe the best idea is to give them a subscription to a great bird-watching magazine, like Bird Watcher's Digest. Visit [www.birdwatchersdigest.com](http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com) for more tips on helping young birders get a strong start.

## Annual Wild Bird Seed Sale

We've confirmed the date with Copley Feed for our Annual Wild Bird Seed Sale, November 10, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Plan your purchases, however, be prepared for sticker shock. According to Mark Roesner of Copley Feed, and the folks at Olinger Seed (our generous partners in this venture), pricing of sunflower products has gone crazy this season for a couple reasons: The huge jump in sunflower cost forced by a drought in the Midwest and ... Actually, it's a single reason—the weather.

We'll have the usual menu of avian attractions, plus peanuts (shelled, 25-lb bags) a favorite of Blue Jays and those fat fuzzy brown birds with big fluffy tails.

As has been our tradition, this year's wild bird seed sale is possible through the generous cooperation of Copley Feed & Supply store on Copley Circle, 1468 S. Cleveland-Massillon Road.

Our seed is fresh and prices are competitive with retail offerings in the area. This is the chapter's only fund raising effort. Profits support our educational programs and newsletters.

A special thanks go to Nancy and Mark Roesner of Copley Feed for their usual outstanding generosity. And let's give an additional shout-out to Joyce and Wolfgang Pelz, and the good folks at NaturaLawn of America, for their efforts in coordinating this project.

### **Order Deadline is November 3rd Pick up is November 10th at Copley Feed**

Please mail your check, payable to Greater Akron Audubon Society, and completed order form ASAP to:

JoyWolf Enterprises  
PO Box 26278  
Akron, OH 44319

All order forms must be in by November 3rd to accurately place the order with Copley Feed.

|                                                          |         | How many?    | Total \$ |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---------|--------------|----------|
| Oil Sunflower, 50 pounds .....                           | \$30.00 | _____        | _____    |
| Niger seed, 10 pounds .....                              | \$13.00 | _____        | _____    |
| Wild bird mix:                                           |         |              |          |
| 20 pounds .....                                          | \$13.00 | _____        | _____    |
| 50 pounds .....                                          | \$27.00 | _____        | _____    |
| Bird Banquet, 35 pounds .....                            | \$25.00 | _____        | _____    |
| Songbird Choice, 40 pounds .....                         | \$33.00 | _____        | _____    |
| Peanuts, 25 pounds .....                                 | \$36.00 | _____        | _____    |
| I would like to donate to the Chapter general fund ..... |         |              | _____    |
|                                                          |         | <b>TOTAL</b> | _____    |

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

*Pick-up will be Saturday, November 10th from 9AM to 1PM, at Copley Feed.  
All seed not picked up by 1PM is donated to the Seiberling Nature Realm.*